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GAIUS MARIUS

THE RISE AND FALL
OF ROME'S SAVIOUR



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The Rise and Fall of Rome's Saviour

By Marc Hyden



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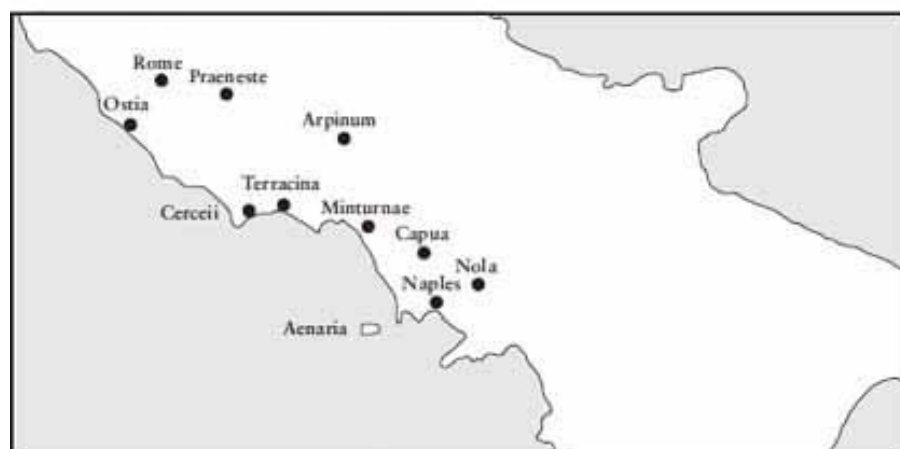
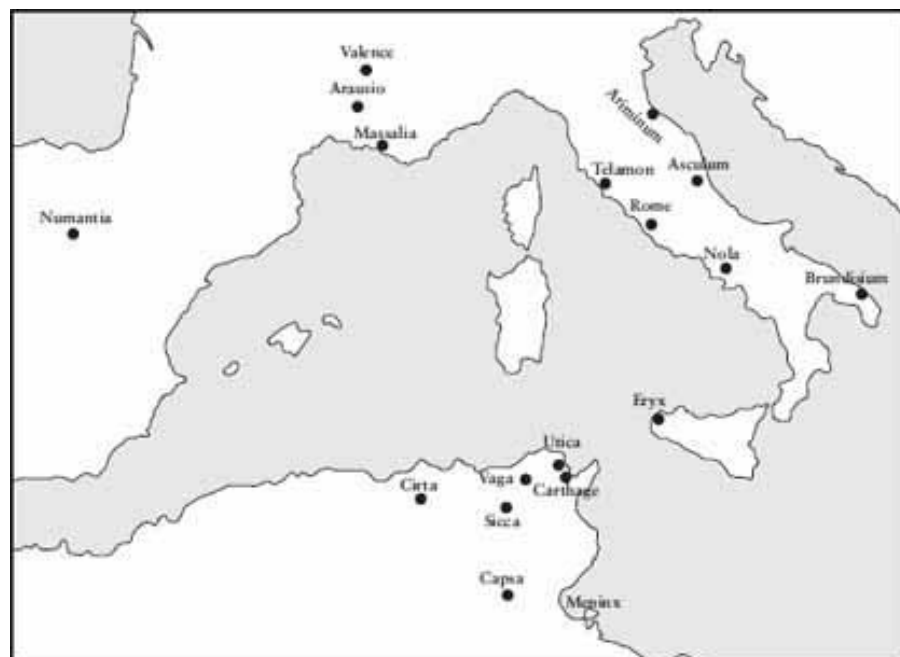
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I

ARPINUM

'It is from the farming class that the bravest men and sturdiest soldiers come.'

– Marcus Porcius Cato

Ever since the Western Roman Empire fell in AD 476, the world has been fascinated by both the Roman Republic and Empire, and for good reason. Rome was unique in its achievements, longevity and influence. In fact, Rome is entirely unchallenged as the Western Hemisphere's greatest empire, but in retrospect, its ultimate collapse seemed inevitable after centuries of mismanagement. Even so, more than 1,500 years after the exhausted empire fell, its lasting impression and influence can still be plainly observed. Accordingly, the Roman period has long been romanticized, and many of its former leaders are idolized even today. These legendary men, including Julius Caesar and Emperors Augustus, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius and Constantine, are deservedly recognized for their accomplishments, but to solely focus on these individuals ignores the Romans who made their rise possible. Many illustrious men preceded them, and perhaps the most exceptional of them all was Gaius Marius. He was unmatched by his contemporaries and predecessors in many ways, but his name has survived only in relative obscurity. However, his story is easily one of the greatest rarely told.

In an extraordinary rise, Gaius Marius reached the pinnacle of power in ancient Rome and attained unprecedented prominence. He took the political world by storm and remained in power longer than any previous Roman. He is credited with reforming the Republic's legions and defeating some of Rome's most ominous and wily threats in dazzling military engagements. Consequently, he gained the reputation of a masterful and beloved general who saved Rome from certain disaster, and he became the willing recipient of the public's adulation. At the zenith of his career, he was even considered much more than a mere man. At times, his stature resembled that of a demigod rather than a flawed politician, and while he certainly was a fallible human, Marius undoubtedly defined the age in which he lived in ways that few others have done.

However, Marius was an unlikely hero. His family wasn't

particularly influential in Rome. In fact, none of his closely related kinsmen had ever held a Roman political office. Furthermore, Marius claimed to have been raised in relative poverty and was constantly troubled by hardships, but he was tenacious and ambitious. He settled for nothing less than unrivaled greatness, but he lived in a time when it was incredibly difficult to enter the political scene and rise to power without boundless wealth and an illustrious family lineage. Undaunted by these obstacles, Marius clawed his way to the top until he obtained a level of influence, success, popularity and wealth that was unmatched by any other Roman until the era of Julius Caesar, who happened to be Marius' nephew.

While Marius' ascendancy was undoubtedly impressive, it wasn't without copious transgressions. He increasingly demonstrated his willingness to circumvent Rome's constitution when he believed that it was personally beneficial, and he regrettably partnered with unscrupulous politicians to achieve many of his political goals. All of which sullied his largely esteemed reputation, but Marius' grip on power was not everlasting. As his authority dwindled and was challenged, the defects of his character became ever more apparent. His propensity towards pettiness, cruelty and an unquenchable thirst for power was conspicuous during his decline and unfortunately defined the final chapter of his life. Nevertheless, his ultimate fall from grace was just as spectacular as his rise, and in an ironic and tragic turn of events, the man who once saved the Roman Republic also played an unmistakable role in its demise and destroyed his impressive legacy in the process.

Gaius Marius was born around 157 BC in an era when simply surviving infancy was a notable accomplishment.¹ Around thirty to forty per cent of live born children perished before their first birthday, but the hardy young Marius endured the vulnerable early childhood years and was raised amidst a period of great change in ancient Rome. By this time, the Roman government was exhibiting signs of stress, even though its dominion and influence was rapidly spreading throughout the Mediterranean. Rome's ascension, like Marius' rise, was remarkable and unforeseen, but it was not without risks and unwanted side effects. Nevertheless, the evolution into a world-renowned power did not occur overnight.²

According to one legend, the Trojan Prince Aeneas led an exodus of his people following the Greek's destruction of Troy. They settled in Italy, and hundreds of years later, in 753 BC, Rome was founded by

Aeneas' descendants, the fratricidal Romulus and his twin brother Remus. Yet, concord among the siblings was apparently impossible, as Romulus slew Remus. Following the murder, Romulus became the settlement's first king, overseeing Rome's initial blossoming.³ His death, however, is shrouded in uncertainty. In one tradition, he miraculously ascended into the heavens, but a different legend alleges that the Roman Senate tired of his despotic reign. They conspired to assassinate Rome's founder during a Senate hearing, and at the chosen time, they struck him down. After they successfully slew Romulus, they dismembered his body and each senator walked out of the meeting with part of Romulus' corpse hidden under their toga to conceal their crime. Rome's inclination towards violence and its disdain for autocratic rule was abundantly clear early in its history, but this was not the last instance of a famed Roman leader suffering an ignominious end.⁴

After more than two centuries of monarchal rule, the Romans grew weary of King Lucius Tarquinius Superbus' oppression. So, in 509 BC, they wrested the monarch's power, expelled him and instituted a republican form of government, which was eventually governed by popular assemblies, the Senate, and a series of magistrates whose power was limited. Romans were intent on never allowing a single man to ever attain unfettered dominance again.⁵

By a series of alliances and alleged defensive wars with local tribes, the Roman Republic achieved mastery over much of the Italian peninsula, but before long, they came into contact with the Western Mediterranean's superpower, Carthage, resulting in the Punic Wars. Carthage was situated on the Mediterranean in modern-day Tunisia. It was founded by Phoenicians from the city-state of Tyre, and it flourished as a trading community. At times, Carthage appeared to be a cruel and unforgiving culture. They were a polytheistic people who offered children as sacrifices, and Carthaginian generals who returned in failure were regularly executed. Their merciless domestic policies shocked and offended many in the ancient world, but regardless of their alleged barbarism, Carthage grew into a mercantile empire and boasted a dominant navy.⁶

Although once allied to one another by a series of treaties, Rome and Carthage eventually came to blows, which led to the Punic Wars. Rome defeated Carthage in the First Punic War (264–241 BC), exacted a hefty indemnity and reduced Carthage's overseas possessions. The struggle sparked Rome's rise as a legitimate regional power and the

creation of a mighty Roman navy.⁷ However, the industrious Carthaginians rebounded more quickly than Rome could have ever expected, and under the leadership of Hamilcar Barca and his son, Hannibal Barca, Carthage expanded its influence into Spain, benefiting from the region's rich silver deposits. Rome became especially concerned with Carthage's ascendancy and sought justification to reopen war with Carthage and curtail its re-emerging influence, which resulted in the Second Punic War (218–201 BC). Hannibal Barca had no intention of submitting to Rome's demands. He led a Carthaginian army from Spain into the Italian peninsula, where he outwitted many Roman generals, humiliated their armies and terrorized the Roman people for over a decade. Unable to weaken Rome's alliances or sack the city, Hannibal was ultimately forced to return to Carthage when a brash young Roman general named Publius Cornelius Scipio (Scipio Africanus) invaded his homeland. The two generals met at the Battle of Zama, where Rome finally defeated Hannibal and instituted such harsh terms that Carthage never again posed a serious threat.⁸ The Hannibalic episode never diminished from the Roman consciousness. Ancient parents frightened their disobedient children by exclaiming, 'Hannibal at the gates!', and during times of crisis, some Romans even used the phrase to express an emergency's graveness. The terrifying experience was an uncomfortable reminder to commoners, aristocrats and lawmakers alike that Rome was far from invincible.⁹

Following the Second Punic War, Rome remained distressed over Carthage's existence, even though it was reduced to little more than a defenceless city-state. Many Romans advocated for eradicating Carthage once and for all. The republican statesman Marcus Porcius Cato (Cato the Elder; Cato the Censor) agreed and likewise beat the drum of war. He even concluded every speech on a variety of topics by exclaiming, 'In my opinion, Carthage must be destroyed.'¹⁰ In time, his advice was embraced as Rome declared war under dubious justifications. Scipio Africanus' adopted grandson, Scipio Aemilianus, was appointed to annihilate Carthage, whereby he successfully sacked and razed the city, ending the Third Punic War (149–146 BC) and forever extinguishing the Carthaginian threat.¹¹

After the conflicts with Carthage, Rome emerged as the dominant regional power. It essentially controlled Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, much of Spain, parts of Africa and the Italian peninsula. Rome was a new superpower that imposed its will at home and overseas, and as their domain grew, Romans even considered the Mediterranean their own

personal lake (and later, the *mare nostrum*, ‘our sea’). The geopolitical power shift also caused immense riches to flow into Rome. Tax revenue from newly acquired territories increased the state’s budget, precious metals were in abundance because of recently seized mines and booty and slaves captured in wars lined Roman pockets. As a consequence of Rome’s ascendancy, the state and a countless number of its citizens became tremendously wealthy.

From the vantage point of many outsiders, Rome must have appeared to be a stable, harmonious and indestructible power with inexhaustible wealth, but the city of Rome wasn’t physically representative of these notions. In 157 BC, Rome was not the marble metropolis adorned with statues and iconic buildings that we now envision. That came later. Instead, it was crowded with brick and wooden structures, which left much to be desired. In fact, the great Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero referred to Rome as Romulus’ cesspool, and this epithet likely rang true. An amalgam of offensive odours from the filth of industry, sewage from a population of over 300,000 souls and the polluted Tiber River produced a repugnant mixture, which many moderns and ancients alike would have found insufferable.¹² It was so intense that Rome’s stench probably contaminated the air miles beyond the city’s *pomerium*, Rome’s sacred municipal boundary.¹³

Unlike the grid city of Alexandria, Rome wasn’t built using any discernible urban plan. Buildings sprung up seemingly at random and roads failed to follow an orderly pattern. They zigzagged throughout the city, abruptly changed direction, and were often littered with ancient city life’s detritus and even the occasional abandoned corpse. Even without the cluttered rubble, the streets were often too narrow to permit more than one cart to pass at a time, leading to traffic jams and gridlock. Eventually, the government was forced to address the ongoing transportation nightmare. Therefore, during Julius Caesar’s reign, he outlawed the traversal of carts during the day to ease traffic congestion, which certainly ensured noisy nights.¹⁴

Shops and apartments lined the erratic streets and regularly reached three and four stories or more, but they were prone to sudden collapse and conflagrations.¹⁵ Unfortunately, there was no organized and dependable firefighting force in Rome until Emperor Augustus’ tenure (27 BC–AD 14). He founded a dedicated corps of firemen known as the *vigiles*, but even then, they were better at warning potential victims and quarantining fires than actually extinguishing

them. Regardless of their efficacy, the ever-present risk of death and destruction without warning in one's home must have been unsettling.¹⁶

While the city of Rome did not meet many contemporary notions of greatness, often neither did the republican system of government, which had united Rome and guided it through many crises. It was frequently perverted and abused. The once peaceful discourse of political movements became increasingly violent, and populist demagogues rose to power and exploited every opportunity for personal gain. As Rome's political factions and social orders grew ever more hostile, the Republic's very existence was threatened.

Rome was essentially comprised of two major classes, the patricians and the plebeians. The patricians were an elite and venerable class of Roman families who were often influential, wealthy and powerful, while the plebeians were all free non-patricians. Within the plebeian class, there were rich, poor, powerful and impotent people. Being a plebeian didn't necessarily preclude one from being successful or dictate the level of the family's influence. Many plebeians joined the aristocracy, became senators, amassed great wealth and were even elected to the consulship, the government's executive office. However, the overwhelming majority of plebeians were impoverished.

For much of the early Roman Republic, the patricians were essentially a ruling elite, and the plebeians had little leverage in the government's mechanics. They understandably grew tired of being oppressed, but instead of resorting to violence, the plebeians peacefully extricated themselves from their weak position in Rome. They abandoned the city and left it to the patricians. It was essentially a strike, but it enabled both parties to reach a compromise that created a more equitable power-sharing agreement without the use of violence.¹⁷

Negotiated settlements were necessary for Rome's political system to successfully operate. To create a law during much of the Republican period, the Senate negotiated and approved measures and then presented them to one of Rome's voting assemblies for final approval, but the rise of the office of the tribunate terminated years of precedent. Tribunes were eventually given the power to circumvent the Senate and present bills directly to the people without senatorial consent, and they sometimes introduced radical legislation, which created dangerous situations.

By 133 BC, Scipio Africanus' biological grandson, Tiberius

Sempronius Gracchus, was elected to the tribunate and promised free land to the poor. His reforms and methods caused great political hostility because he bypassed the Senate, forced legislation that the Senate opposed and essentially became one of the architects of the Roman welfare state. Still, his bills were passed, but later in 133 BC, Tiberius and his supporters clashed with senators in a bloody confrontation, during which Tiberius was beaten to death. While Tiberius' homicide wasn't the first political murder in Rome's history, it did represent a watershed moment, marking when public violence seemed to become increasingly common.¹⁸ Tiberius' brother, Gaius Sempronius Gracchus, resumed his brother's populist mantle, and he successfully continued his reforms and created a subsidized grain programme for all Romans. However, in 121 BC, his faction and the opposition met in a murderous confrontation that left Gaius dead. Nevertheless, the monumental Gracchan achievements proved the tribunes' utility and power, which Marius later used to his advantage with the familiar by-product of added bloodshed.¹⁹

In ancient Rome, there were no political parties as we understand them. Candidates weren't selected based upon party affiliation. They were elected on character, ability, family name and frequently an ample helping of bribes. There were, however, two major political factions, the *populares* and the *optimates*. The *populares* (favouring the people) were those who tended to support populist measures and often relied on the power of the proletariat rather than the Senate. The Gracchus brothers were *populares*, and in due time, Marius was too, even though he didn't support all of their reforms. The *optimates* (best men) promoted traditional legislation, regularly aligned with the aristocracy and often sought to increase the Senate's power. However, these definitions are oversimplifications of complex dynamics. Nevertheless, the two factions increasingly settled matters through force rather than civilized negotiations as the republican form of government struggled to effectively function.

Bribery emerged as one of ancient Rome's many troubling issues. Whereas Romans were supposed to vote on principle, leadership and common-sense policies, political support became more complicated. Politicians learned how to purchase the electors' allegiance, either by promising welfare programmes to benefit the commoners, directly transferring wealth to the voters or providing spectacles and feasts for the masses. For instance, in 99 BC, Lucius Cornelius Sulla unsuccessfully campaigned on his military exploits, but when he later

canvassed on a platform of unprecedented free games, he was easily elected. The Roman voters weren't the only ones enjoying inducements of various kinds. Politicians were also on the take. They frequently received illicit payments from diplomats, foreign leaders and even their fellow statesmen. The Roman Republic's forefathers would have been appalled by the Romans' actions. Politicians, and indeed many electors, were corrupted by avarice and willing to exchange their principles for fortunes. Unfortunately, statesmen of great character became rarer as both the *populares* and *optimates* were guilty of corruption and malfeasance.²⁰

It's likely that Marius didn't regularly witness the early political upheavals or Rome's filth as a young man. He was born and raised outside of Rome in the village of Cereatae, located near the Latium settlement of Arpinum. It was an ancient community that was nestled in the wooded hills sixty-five miles south-east of Rome. Today, the area is called Arpino.²¹ Before Marius' birth, the Republic asserted its influence over Arpinum, but its inhabitants maintained a strong relationship with Rome and were even awarded Roman citizenship in 188 BC. Without Arpinum's enfranchisement, Marius most likely would never have become a famed statesman or general, and Arpinum's other favourite son, Cicero, would also have existed only in anonymity had Arpinum's citizens not been granted citizenship.²²

Life in the eternal city compared to existence in Arpinum was conspicuously disparate. Rural life was simple, harsh and unforgiving. For most, a lifetime of toiling in the fields was very unrewarding, but it was considered virtuous. It shielded honourable farmers from the decadence and excesses of city life and instilled appreciation for the honest hard work that was required in agriculture. Cato the Elder even exclaimed, 'It is from the farming class that the bravest men and sturdiest soldiers come, their calling is most highly respected, their livelihood is most assured and is looked on with the least hostility.' It is likely to have been in Arpinum where the youthful Marius acquired many of the admirable traits that served him well, including his disposition towards austere living, methodical preparation, strict discipline and a tremendous work ethic.²³

Even though it was documented that Marius' family resided in a rural area and possibly made a living in agriculture, little is really known about them. His father was also named Gaius Marius, and his mother was Fulcinia.²⁴ It appears that little Marius likely had at least one brother, Marcus Marius, and no less than one sister, named

Maria.²⁵ Ancient Roman naming conventions differed greatly from the modern era. Each male was given a *praenomen*, which essentially served as a first name. They also had a *nomen*, which identified which gens, or family, the person belonged to, like today's surnames. In Marius' case, his *praenomen* was Gaius and his *nomen* was Marius. However, many Romans were also given a *cognomen*, an additional name that followed the *nomen*. It often identified a specific branch of the individual's gens or even served as a nickname. For example, Gaius Julius Caesar was a member of the Caesar branch of the Julius gens. Women in Rome were far less lucky. They simply assumed the female version of their father's *nomen*, which has frustrated historians for well over two millennia. So, Gaius Julius Caesar's daughter's name was simply Julia.²⁶

Marius' ancestry was far less illustrious than Caesar's. Marius' father had never held a Roman public office, and both of his parents were plebeians, not patricians. The ancient sources mostly agree that the origins of Marius' lineage were unspectacular and that his parents may have even lived in poverty.²⁷ In a speech recreated after his death, Marius purportedly acknowledged his humble beginnings, and he admitted his status as a commoner and described his early life as a series of perpetual hardships.²⁸ Yet, some modern historians find this claim difficult to accept and believe that Marius may have conveniently exaggerated his circumstances to curry favour with Rome's lowest classes. They purport that Marius' father was likely a well-to-do plebeian known as an equestrian.²⁹ Equestrians were essentially the business class in ancient Rome. They were a designated census group of prosperous plebeians whose wealth exceeded a set threshold. It is more than likely that Marius' father was indeed an equestrian. However, all that can be said for certain is that Marius' family maintained relations with a few notable power brokers and his father possessed the required wealth for the young man to qualify for military service.³⁰ In this period, not every Roman citizen was permitted to serve in the legions. It was theorized that only those with enough wealth would adequately fight to defend Rome, because they were battling to secure their own possessions. Because of this erroneous assumption, many Romans were excluded from military service, but Marius ultimately believed that this dubious supposition was postposterous.³¹

The wealth and class of a family additionally determined the degree and intensity of a youth's education. There was no public

schooling in Rome, nor were parents required to provide it, but they were expected to fund their children's education privately, if possible, to prepare them for future success. The wealthiest Romans afforded private in-home tutors, who were often Greek slaves. Others could only manage to send their progeny to schools where multiple children were taught together, and the poorest Romans simply didn't receive any formal education. That doesn't necessarily mean that the most impoverished Romans were altogether uneducated. Certainly some were self-taught while others learned from their parents.³²

By Marius' era, Roman education was changing, influenced by the Greeks, but Marius supposedly considered studying under the Greeks' tutelage to be a useless endeavour because he viewed them as no better than corrupted slaves. Marius even allegedly boasted that he never learned a single Greek letter. However, if he was educated, then his schooling likely included considerable Greek influence, because it had been increasingly ingrained in Roman educational models.³³ Romans both despised and envied the Greeks. They believed that they were a decadent and effeminate society, but they conversely concluded that the Greeks were superior in the arts, philosophy and education. Nevertheless, as Rome expanded, its educational norms evolved and were heavily influenced by Greek literature and teachers.³⁴

Roman education usually started early in youngsters' lives. Parents often taught their children basic knowledge, and tutors later enhanced their skills. When privileged Roman youths were around seven years old, they began their primary education, known as *ludus*. Armed with an abacus and frequently a wax tablet on which to write, they learned elementary reading, writing and arithmetic in an onerous process. Tutors were strict and liberally exercised corporal punishment, and the school days were laborious and long, beginning before dawn and perhaps ending after sunset. By around the youths' twelfth birthdays, they began intensely studying grammar, literature and basic composition at the direction of a *grammaticus*. Then, at 15 or 16 years old, fortunate adolescents studied under a *rhetor*, who trained the youngsters in the art of public and persuasive speaking in the event that they wished to pursue a career in law or politics.³⁵

Without knowing Marius' familial financial situation, it is impossible to determine what form or scope of education he acquired. If Marius was indeed of equestrian stock, then he would have been provided a rigorous and comprehensive education. If he was born into

a family stricken with extreme poverty, then he likely wouldn't have received any formal schooling. However, his level of education may have fallen between the two extremes. Yet, it is unlikely that he could have developed into such a successful politician or become the compelling orator that the ancient writer Sallust presented without some education, but it is possible that he was self-taught. Nevertheless, it seems highly probable that his parents did fund some extent of education for young Marius. In all likelihood, Marius probably accompanied his father on business, which was a traditional form of education, spent time learning from an instructor and gained at least a working knowledge of the Greek language.³⁶

As the young Marius grew older, and presumably more educated, he likely celebrated his maturation into manhood in the same fashion as most Roman males. In a highly anticipated ceremony, boys generally around the ages of 15 to 16 removed their childhood protective amulet, and they were shaved for the first time, given a shorter and more mature haircut and clothed in the *toga virilis* (toga of adulthood).³⁷ Following the ritual, a procession of youths and their families marched into the forum, where the adolescents were presented as citizens, and then the youngsters offered a sacrifice to Juventas, the goddess of youth. This ceremony often coincided with the annual Liberalia Festival on 17 March, and while most of the eager participants were teenagers, there was no requisite age for the ritual.³⁸ In fact, Emperor Augustus didn't even complete the rite until he was 24 years old.³⁹

Following his coming-of-age ritual, the young Marius entered a Roman world whose borders were expanding, influence spreading and wealth flourishing, but at the state's core was decay and an underlying, albeit permeating, dysfunction. Regardless of Rome's unbounded outward successes, the political leaders' ignobility threatened to metastasize and undermine Rome's accomplishments. As has always been the case, limitless prosperity simply cannot be fostered or indefinitely maintained in an environment where its core is comprised of poor moral character. Marius would have been wise to learn this lesson.

II

NUMANTIA

‘One of the company asked Scipio where the Romans, after him, should obtain such another general, Scipio, gently clapping Marius on the shoulder as he sat next him, replied, “Here, perhaps”.’

– *Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus*

There is a dearth of historical records documenting Marius’ early life, and because of this paucity of evidence, much is unknown. In fact, even the extant sources covering Marius’ achievements are limited, confused and, at times, contradictory. Unfortunately, factual accuracy wasn’t the ancient writers’ primary goal. To them, writing was an art meant to be compelling, beautiful and sometimes to serve political ends, and therefore, dates weren’t always veracious. Events were sometimes rearranged, and actions were often exaggerated. Nonetheless, enough is known to cobble together a very rough picture of Marius’ early career. It appears that after his entrance into manhood, the youthful Marius wasted no time enlisting in the military. Apparently, he began his service in the legions as early as permissible, possibly aged 17, and before long he experienced combat in Spain. However, his rank and the circumstances in which he joined are uncertain.¹

The Roman legions that Marius joined were much different from modern militaries. During this period, Rome had no standing armies. Instead, the Republic was essentially defended by a citizen militia. Legions were raised only as they were needed and disbanded after campaigns concluded. Local conflicts might last a handful of months, but extended wars and overseas garrison duty could continue for many years. However, no Roman was required to serve in the legions for more than sixteen years, but prolonged campaigns could easily become financially ruinous for the legionaries. While they were compensated by the state for their service, their earnings were often insufficient, which was sometimes detrimental to the soldiers’ solvency. Nevertheless, many of them hoped to supplement their meagre income and enrich themselves by amassing the spoils of war, but Roman armies were often quite large and filled with thousands of foot soldiers competing for the conflict’s plunder.

Similar to modern militaries, the Republic divided its many

legionaries into rigidly defined fighting groups. The Roman army's largest units were the legions. At full strength, each was composed of nearly 5,000 troops, but they were often augmented by allied auxiliary contingents. In a single legion, there were 4,200 foot soldiers and 300 cavalymen. The rank and physical position of each Roman legionary largely depended upon their wealth, class and age. The wealthiest troops served in the cavalry, because they could afford to purchase horses, and the less fortunate Romans became foot soldiers. The legions' infantrymen formed three different lines, and each line was further divided into ten maniples. Each maniple was split into two centuries, which were each led by an officer known as a centurion. There was no single commanding leader of a legion. Six military tribunes were the most senior officers, but their commands alternated so that a pair of tribunes always sat atop the legion's hierarchy. The cavalry was similarly divided. The 300 cavalymen were split into ten troops, each led by three decurions. A single Roman general or a pair of commanders was generally appointed to prosecute military campaigns, and in this way, a set number of legions fell under their purview.²

While Roman generals were predominantly elected officials who served both civil and military roles, with varying degrees of success, the ranks were filled with conscripts and volunteers. These soldiers were Roman citizens who were wealthy enough to qualify for military service and were initially expected to provide their own equipment and supplies. However, by around 123 BC, Gaius Gracchus successfully introduced a bill that required the state to furnish the legionaries' necessary weapons and clothing.³

In the 130s BC, not long before Gaius Gracchus' tribunate, Marius appears in the historical record, serving in the Third Celtiberian War, also known as the Numantine War.⁴ Following the Punic Wars, Rome assumed control over several Spanish tribes, many of whom were not pleased with being ruled as subjects, which resulted in numerous revolts. The Numantines and their allies also rebelled against Roman rule, but their uprising was not so easily extinguished because the Romans were not accustomed to overseas tribal guerrilla wars. A series of Roman generals were dispatched in succession to end the insurrection, but they were repeatedly repulsed. The Numantines' stronghold was centred in the town of Numantia, a highly defensible city that was protected by strong walls, natural bluffs and a marsh on one side. Roman commanders time and again attempted to lay siege to

and storm the city, but they failed miserably. One general, Gaius Hostilius Mancinus, was even ambushed by the rebels, defeated and forced to agree to an unfavourable treaty, which the Senate had no intention of honouring.⁵

The situation became a national embarrassment. The public demanded a swift victory and placed the command in the competent hands of the man who vanquished Carthage in the Third Punic War, Scipio Aemilianus. The seasoned general assembled a Roman army of around 20,000 men and created an allied coalition numbering 40,000 soldiers.⁶ It is unclear as to whether Aemilianus personally enlisted Marius or if he was among the legionaries already in Spain, but one thing is certain, his service in Numantia helped jumpstart his illustrious career. Nevertheless, when Aemilianus arrived at the Spanish front, he was dismayed by the troops' low morale and poor physique. He therefore instituted strict discipline and a rigorous training regimen to return the soldiers to respectable fighting form.⁷ Marius looked on with admiration at the stern disciplinarian's orders and the concomitant results. He gleefully obeyed Aemilianus' commands, and if he was serving as a lower-level officer, then perhaps he even relayed them to his own subordinates. It surely reminded him of Arpinum's austere and unforgiving farm life. Nevertheless, the lessons learned on the Spanish battlefields and rural Italy's farms remained with him as he ultimately rose to power.⁸

Aemilianus patched together a multinational coalition for the Numantine War, and the Numidians were one of the allies who answered his call for aid. Numidia was a North African kingdom, and its ascent was due to the power vacuum caused by Carthage's defeat and because Rome permitted its rise. Following the Second Punic War, Numidia emerged as a newly unified nation-state. It enjoyed a close alliance with Rome, who allowed it to slowly annex much of the remnants of Carthage's domain. As it grew in power, the Numidian kingdom absorbed the territory sandwiched between Mauretania to the west, the Roman province of Africa in the east and the Saharan Desert in the south. Its realm broadly occupied parts of modern-day Algeria and Tunisia, and its capital was Cirta, which is now the Algerian city of Constantine. It is perched in the mountains, surrounded by greenery and protected by steep bluffs that are as imposing today as they were over 2,000 years ago. While most of the Numidian subjects were ethnic Berbers, Numidia ruled over different tribes that didn't always harmoniously coexist.⁹

Masinissa was the unified Numidian kingdom's first king, and he fathered three sons, Mastanabal, Gulussa and Micipsa. Mastanabal and Micipsa ruled jointly when their father died of old age, but Mastanabal passed away, leaving Micipsa as Numidia's sole king. Before dying, Mastanabal conceived an illegitimate son with a concubine, and he was named Jugurtha. Micipsa allowed the bastard to remain in his court, not as royalty, but as a commoner. However, Jugurtha was an energetic, handsome, charismatic and popular prince who left the insecure Micipsa feeling threatened. So, when Aemilianus pleaded for military aid, Micipsa enthusiastically agreed to support his endeavour and sent Jugurtha at the head of a military contingent, but his plan to remove his popular adversary and place him in harm's way disastrously backfired.¹⁰

As Aemilianus continued his extended training regimen, he initially avoided contact with the Numantines, but they eventually forced him into a battle, most likely via an ambush. At first, the fearful Romans broke ranks and shamefully began to retreat, but the old general quickly halted their withdrawal and admonished the fleeing soldiers. He reinstituted order, turned his troops around and sallied forth, which resulted in a Numantine rout.¹¹ This was one of several skirmishes that ultimately resulted in Rome tightening its grip on the Numantines.¹²

Later in 134 BC, Aemilianus was finally assured that his men were prepared for battle. He successfully engaged the enemy and in time marched his legions to the impregnable fortress city of Numantia, where the Numantines were taking shelter.¹³ However, he did not intend on storming the city or laying siege, as many of his predecessors had previously attempted and spectacularly failed. Instead, he planned on starving the city into submission.¹⁴ Aemilianus ordered his coalition of forces to erect a wall around Numantia that was 10ft high and punctuated with seven towers, which allowed the Romans to harry the Numantines with missiles. His soldiers also dug deep trenches that protected Aemilianus' barricade, but he was unable to entirely encircle the town because a swamp impeded the wall's construction. Rather than attempting to overcome nature, he used it to his advantage. Aemilianus created a dam, which flooded the swamp, transforming it into an imposing lake. Between the walls and the newly formed waterway, the Numantines were completely surrounded, but hope was not yet entirely lost.¹⁵

The Numantines were widely known as great swimmers, and they

most likely had the ability to assemble crude boats within the city. Possibly through these means, they attempted to import provisions via the newly created lake. However, the ever-thoughtful Aemilianus had sabotaged the waterway, hanging blades from a cable just below the water's surface to block goods from being delivered to the Numantines and prevent them from escaping. The Numantines were indeed trapped, but Aemilianus was not overconfident or impetuous.¹⁶ He was still very cautious in his planning. When the Romans finished erecting the barricade around Numantia, he turned his men about face and ordered them to construct a wall of contravallation to protect their rear from potential attacks by the Numantines' allies. This served the Romans well.¹⁷

As the days slowly passed, food dwindled inside Numantia and morale plummeted. The situation was beyond desperate, and their only hope was to goad their allies into aiding them. However, they had no way of communicating with the surrounding Spanish tribes. Therefore, an influential Numantine named Rhetogenes braved great danger and escaped the blockaded city with a small band of warriors to plead for their allies' help. A Spanish people called the Lutians entertained their overtures and agreed to dispatch hundreds of soldiers to their defence, but it was not to be. Aemilianus shrewdly learned of their designs and marched a contingent of troops to Lutia, where he demanded that they surrender the men who had planned to aid Rhetogenes. The tribe's elders complied, and once the troublemakers were in Aemilianus' custody, he promptly commanded his subordinates to savagely sever the rebels' hands, both as a warning and to prevent them from ever aiding the enemy.¹⁸

Meanwhile, hunger and disease were rampant in Numantia. The living warily resorted to consuming the deceased, and some of the weaker inhabitants were even killed to provide the villagers with sustenance. In time, the inevitability of their situation became apparent. To avoid a slow painful death induced by the Romans, many of the Numantines first slew their families and then themselves. The few survivors begrudgingly decided to surrender to Aemilianus in 133 BC, but not before setting fire to Numantia in one last act of defiance.¹⁹ Aemilianus finished what the survivors were unable to accomplish and levelled the town, just as he had done to Carthage.²⁰

Marius' role in suppressing the revolt isn't clear, but he was commended for his bravery and received many honours during the conflict. It appears that he also successfully engaged an enemy soldier

in single combat within Aemilianus' view, which left the veteran commander thoroughly impressed. Aemilianus additionally appreciated Marius' delightful adherence to his transformation of the army. The general required his legionaries, their horses, other beasts of burden and wagons to be in perpetual battle readiness. The accomplished old commander formed a habit of thoroughly inspecting every facet of his army, and one day, he examined Marius' horse and mule. The general was remarkably pleased with the health and demeanour of Marius' animals. Aemilianus even regularly described Marius' sterling example to his soldiers and presented him as a model legionary. Because of this episode, the phrase 'Marian mule' eventually became synonymous with a person who exhibited persistence, patience and a tremendous work ethic.²¹

Marius was an exceptional soldier, but his rank is unknown. He certainly wasn't a senior officer, because he hadn't been elected to any public office at this point. However, because of Marius' rapport with Aemilianus and his family's relationship to several influential Romans, it is fair to assume that Marius was no simple 'grunt'. It's conceivable that he was a lowly legionary, but it seems more than likely that he had either been initially appointed to a junior officership or promoted to one for his conspicuously commendable service. Considering that he painstakingly cared for a horse, it is more than likely that he was a member of the cavalry, which supports the theory that he was a member of the equestrian class. In all likelihood, by the time of the Numantine conflict, he was probably a cavalry officer.²²

While Marius was still in Spain, a group of soldiers whittling away the time decided to pose a question to Aemilianus. They enquired where they should find a general of his calibre once he retired from public service. Aemilianus pondered the question, warmly patted the youthful Marius on the back and answered, 'Here, perhaps'. Apparently, Marius' future gleamed brightly even at this early juncture of his life. Aemilianus may have seen himself in Marius and believed that he would one day emerge as a great military leader in his own mold. Aemilianus' systematic preparations, training, discipline and patience surely reinforced Marius' ideals, but his penchant for cruelty and tough justice may have also rubbed off on the young man. Nevertheless, in time, Marius eclipsed the great Aemilianus' fame, fortune and even successes.²³

However, for the time being, Marius diligently nurtured his nascent public service career, but he probably keenly focused on private

enterprises too. Someone as ambitious as he was wouldn't have spent his free time in Spain idly. The region was rich in minerals and provided abundant opportunities for personal advancement. Following the Numantine War's conclusion, or during the conflict's lulls, Marius may have laboured to acquire mining rights in order to exploit Spain's copious silver and copper deposits. Any bright Roman legionary with disposable wealth would surely have taken advantage of Spain's natural resources in this manner. Spain was also an opportune location for making valuable business connections with equestrians throughout the region, which Marius surely did. While the returns on these investments likely weren't immediate, in time, they must have paid handsome dividends politically and financially.²⁴

Marius was not the only person who made great use of his time in Spain. Jugurtha also valiantly distinguished himself in the war, and he even earned the respect and love of the Roman troops for his venerable service. Aemilianus and the Numidian also became close, trusted friends. During the conflict, he often advised the general, and allegedly, Aemilianus even reserved the most arduous operations for Jugurtha's exemplary leadership. Following the war, as the two parted to return to their homes, Aemilianus requested Jugurtha's presence in his private tent, where he offered the young Numidian sound advice. He implored him to nurture his friendship with the Roman people as a whole and to avoid seeking to ingratiate himself with only Rome's power brokers, especially through bribery. After this conference, Jugurtha set off from Numantia, and Aemilianus purportedly penned a letter to Numidia's King Micipsa. He congratulated him on his nephew's courage and determination, and he described Jugurtha's favour with the Romans. While the missive was framed as a complimentary message, it essentially served as Aemilianus' endorsement of Jugurtha as heir to the Numidian throne.²⁵

Jugurtha may have been shipped to Spain as a popular bastard prince, but he returned as a well-connected and experienced officer who was well-versed in Roman tactics and strategy. Following the Numantine War, King Micipsa couldn't reasonably ignore Jugurtha's rise, nor his favour with the Romans. So, after Jugurtha's arrival in Numidia, Micipsa reluctantly adopted Jugurtha and appointed him as joint heir to the throne alongside his biological sons. However, Jugurtha's rise soon threatened Micipsa's children and even Rome.²⁶ Once allies, Marius and Jugurtha ultimately became bitter foes, but for the time being, both first wished to establish and strengthen their

influence in their respective political centres. Jugurtha returned to Cirta, and Marius eventually arrived in Rome to begin a storied political career.²⁷

III

CURSUS HONORUM

‘[Marius] won office after office, always so conducting himself in each of them as to be regarded worthy of a higher position than that which he was holding.’

– *Gaius Sallustius Crispus*

According to a legend, when Marius was a child, he noticed an eagle’s nest falling from its resting place. The youngster acted quickly and caught the descending eyrie in his cloak, and when he gazed into it, he noticed seven healthy hatchlings. The excited boy surely rushed to relay the incredible episode to his parents. Upon learning what had transpired, the elder Marius and Fulcinia believed that this incident must have been a sign from the gods with portentous meanings. They sought the expertise of seers, who explained that the event was certainly no accident. They contended that Marius was destined to be one of the most powerful men in Rome, and the seven eaglets represented his destiny to hold Rome’s executive post, the consulship, seven times. Marius and his parents must have remained sceptical, considering that no man had ever held the consulship seven times at that point in Roman history, and if they were realistic, then it was highly doubtful that Marius could even obtain a single consulship. Marius wasn’t an aristocrat and didn’t have an illustrious *nomen* or *cognomen*, and no one in his patrilineal line had ever been elected to the consulship. All of which meant that a remarkable political career was incredibly unlikely, but as Marius grew into a man, he was undaunted by his status’ limitations and steadfastly pursued his electoral ambitions.¹

Ancient Rome’s republican government evolved to some extent in the more than three centuries preceding Marius, but many aspects remained constant. After King Superbus was expelled, the Romans created a system, which was an amalgamation of oligarchies, democracies and monarchies. Using this new form of governance, they hoped to forever prevent any single man from obtaining mastery over Rome. They aimed to accomplish this by instituting a system of checks and balances and by dividing power between different governing bodies and elected officials. Their constitution, while unwritten, was initially taken very seriously, but over the course of time, it was bent

and eventually ignored and broken. Nevertheless, by Marius' era, the path to glory and influence could still be achieved in the political arena, which the young and ambitious Marius plainly realized. However, the political system was complex, unforgiving and difficult for newcomers to enter.²

For the vast majority of the Republican period, the Senate was the dominant branch of government, and it was comprised primarily of Romans who had previously been elected to a Roman office.³ Senators were mostly wealthy and seasoned politicians who generally enjoyed permanent membership in the chamber. The Senate was technically an advisory board and not much more, but it wielded immense authority. Senators were integral in the formation of treaties with foreign nations, controlled much of the state's spending and appointed individuals to leadership roles. They often approved measures before they were considered by the popular assemblies and even advised the government's executive officials, the consuls.⁴

There were multiple governing assemblies, which represented the democratic component of the Roman constitution. These were the *concilium plebis* (Plebeian Council), *comitia centuriata* (Military Assembly) and the *comitia tributa* (Tribal or General Assembly). The people's governing bodies voted on bills and elected different magistrates and civic administrators, but these elections weren't purely democratic. The General Assembly, for instance, was comprised of thirty-five voting blocs, called tribes, which operated similarly to the modern Electoral College in the USA. Each citizen had the right to vote in Rome, but how their specific tribe balloted as a whole is what really counted. The greatest number of individual votes in a single tribe determined how it balloted, and each tribe only counted as one vote out of thirty-five tribes. So, obtaining the majority of the thirty-five tribes is what passed motions, not the majority of Romans, but voting by tribes was far from equitable. The populations and demographics of each tribe varied greatly, and voters from the urban tribes were at a distinct advantage. They already lived and worked in Rome and weren't required to travel a large distance to the eternal city to vote, as was the case with the rural tribes. However, once voting commenced and a majority of the total number of tribes was reached on any given motion, then voting was suspended, which meant that the tribes that were scheduled to cast their ballots towards the end of the process often didn't vote at all. Similarly, the Military Assembly was divided into voting blocs called centuries and the

Plebeian Council was split into tribes only consisting of plebeians. They operated similarly to the General Assembly and voted in certain elections and on select measures. Each also bore a degree of inequity, because the Military Assembly favoured the rich and the Plebeian Council banned patricians from participating. Nevertheless, while the Senate could not pass legislation, it ordinarily approved the measures before they were presented to one of the assemblies for consideration. However, for much of Rome's republican history, the voting bodies were essentially expected to be the Senate's rubber stamp.⁵

Most of the state's administration was conducted by a series of elected politicians, who ranged in rank and obligations. Marius keenly understood that successfully climbing this political ladder of elected offices, called the *cursus honorum* (honours race), was a spectacular path to power, because many posts combined civic, military and religious duties. The *cursus honorum* is often used to define the statutory sequence of elected positions that Romans were permitted to hold and the requisite qualifications for each office. At this point in the Republic, the exact progression was less stringent and served as more of a general career path that was followed by many politicians, but there were still some requirements that governed who qualified to seek an office and when.

The first step in the *cursus honorum* was generally the quaestorship. Quaestors were essentially accountants who worked for the Roman treasury, receiving taxes and tributes and paying Rome's financial commitments, but in certain circumstances, they also served military roles. Aediles were considered the next progression. Their duty was primarily to ensure that all public works and buildings were maintained, supervise Rome's games and spectacles and periodically fulfill law enforcement duties. Aediles often personally bankrolled portions of their statutory obligations, and while this may seem like a thankless office, aediles who exhibited their largesse through magnificent festivals became immensely popular. Roman voters remembered their munificence when they cast their votes in future elections.

The third rung of the political ladder was the praetorship. Praetors, like other posts, sometimes served more than one role. First and foremost, they were judges in civil and criminal proceedings, but when the state's executive officers were absent, praetors were sometimes empowered to act on their behalf. They often also served in military leadership roles. Following praetors' terms, they were

customarily appointed to provincial governorships, where they served as the province's executive and provided for its defence and administration. The *cursus honorum*'s final step was the highest-ranking yearly elected Roman office, the consulship. These were the government's executive officers and the most senior military commanders and magistrates. They additionally presided over certain annual elections and issued orders to most of the lower-level elected officials. Two consuls served concurrently, and each had the ability to cancel their colleague or any lower-level official's decisions simply by uttering, 'I forbid!', or in Latin, '*Veto!*'. After a consul's term, he was usually appointed to govern a province, but it was usually a more prestigious and important assignment than a praetor's governorship.⁶ Consuls also enjoyed *imperium*, which was a Latin term for broad judicial and military authority that was regularly granted to consuls, praetors and governors.⁷

One of the evolutions of the Roman system of governance was the emergence of the tribunate. Tribunes of the People, or Tribunes of the Plebs, were initially created to protect plebeians from injustice, but their influence promptly grew. Ten tribunes were elected per annum, and they were eventually vested with the power to propose legislation directly to the people and convene the Senate. However, their unique powers didn't end there. Unlike other elected officers, they weren't subservient to the consuls, and they were considered sacrosanct and wielded especially potent veto powers. Tribunes could even veto their colleagues' vetoes, which sometimes impeded progress. Regardless of these obstacles, charismatic tribunes became immensely powerful, and their advent frequently upset the government's oligarchic status quo. Unfortunately, their influence was often exploited and abused for selfish ends and petty politics. In time, Marius also used the tribunate and employed tribunes in unprecedented ways to impress his will upon the state.⁸

When the government was running smoothly, elections were held annually and each post's term was generally only one year, even though this restriction was sometimes violated. Consuls, like most other offices, were only permitted one-year terms, and they were also restricted to only serving a single term in any ten-year period.⁹ The Roman paranoia over individuals attaining massive influence is apparent in the limits and lengths of the elected officials' terms. In fact, Romans so despised the idea of a Roman king that it was quite insulting to suggest that someone aspired to be a monarch. If a group

suspiciously thought that a politician desired to be Rome's king, then it inspired such animus that it could be fatal. In fact, one of the rumours that was circulated about Tiberius Gracchus was that he yearned to be king.¹⁰ Not long after, bitter senators clubbed him to death.¹¹

While tribunes, like Gracchus, and most magistracies were generally limited to single-year terms and elections were supposed to be held annually, some of Rome's constitutional offices didn't follow the same formula. Every five years, two censors were elected, which were very powerful posts. Censorships were highly esteemed and prestigious positions that were coveted by many. Serving as a censor was often considered the crowning achievement after exhausting the *cursus honorum* and enjoying a long, illustrious political career. Censors were tasked with conducting a census and controlling portions of the state's finances. They also examined issues corresponding to public morality and issued their findings, and they inspected and adjusted the Senate's membership. During their audit, the censors gave senators who were considered morally deficient or were no longer qualified for membership the boot, which was a humiliating end to a senatorial career.

Romans knew that their form of government was inhibited by their processes, abounding vetoes and separation of powers, but that suited them just fine. The system was engineered to prevent overly ambitious politicians from seizing supremacy over the state, but the government's inflexibility could be a severe handicap in times of dire emergency. In response, the Romans created the dictatorship, which was a temporary position, but the post was only intended to be used during constitutional crises or the most desperate circumstances. Dictators were often appointed in connection with military disasters that required swift action or to preside over elections when the consuls were unavailable. While dictators had wide-reaching and unchecked powers, their terms were supposed to automatically expire after no more than six months.¹²

Marius must have been well versed in the story of one of Rome's most famous and beloved dictators, Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus. He was an older patrician gentleman who farmed a small plot of land beyond the Tiber River. One day, while ploughing his fields, he caught sight of a group of senators approaching him. When they arrived, they disclosed to Cincinnatus that a grave military threat was facing Rome and informed him that he had been appointed dictator. Out of a sense

of duty to his country, Cincinnatus laid his plough aside, mustered an army and rapidly vanquished the enemy. Once he completed his task, he relinquished the power of his office a mere sixteen days after he had been appointed. Dictatorships could last up to six months, but he had no desire to hold power longer than was absolutely necessary, a worthy lesson for Marius.¹³ The office, however, fell into disuse by Marius' time. It had laid in abeyance since 202 BC, but it was ultimately revived and perverted, greatly affecting Marius' adherents.¹⁴

Being elected to political posts wasn't the only means to great authority. In ancient Rome, as in any other period, the tremendously wealthy wielded vast influence, but Romans participated in a unique system called *clientela*, which granted additional sway to the affluent and well-connected. *Clientela* was a time-honoured system of mutual favours by which the rich and powerful 'patrons' doled out advice, legal aid, financial support, meals and other assistance to the less fortunate 'clients'. In return, the clients performed favours of their own to benefit their patrons. Clients were often expected to vote for certain measures or candidates, join their patrons' armies or simply work to enhance their patrons' status. The clients who were local to Rome frequently visited their patron around daybreak and accompanied him during his morning business. The size of a patron's entourage was perceived to be directly correlated to the extent of his prestige.

The *clientela* system was complex. Many clients had more than one patron, and Romans could be an individual's patron while at the same time serving as someone's client. These roles were not mutually exclusive. Often, time-worn patronage lists determined who was a patron or a client because these arrangements were hereditary and passed from generation to generation. Romans were expected to do their duty within the web of patronage, and the system of *clientela* was taken very seriously. Laws were even enacted affecting the *clientela* agreements. For instance, clients and patrons were forbidden by law from testifying against one another in court. *Clientela's* utility was not lost on Marius. Throughout much of his career, he successfully leveraged the patronage system to his advantage, but he also dishonourably ignored it at times too.¹⁵

Marius knew that as a non-aristocratic plebeian, military and political success was his best opportunity for advancement in Roman society. Sometime after his Numantine tour, he journeyed to Rome to

begin his political career, and he campaigned for the military tribunate. However, he found some initial difficulty because, unlike most politicians, he was unrecognized in Rome. This should have been unsurprising for Marius, considering that he grew up in Arpinum and was stationed in Spain during portions of his early military service. In due time, his image would become instantly recognizable, and Marius would even become a household name. Nevertheless, during his first election bid, he was undaunted by this obstacle because he had other advantages. His face was unknown to the masses, but the tales of his Numantine exploits and bravado were widely circulated, which he undoubtedly used to his benefit. He certainly campaigned on his military accomplishments, perhaps asked for his patrons' support and may have even parlayed his closeness with the wildly popular Scipio Aemilianus into campaign currency. Regardless of his campaign strategy, when the ballots were tallied, he was duly elected with overwhelming support. Every voting bloc cast their lot for Gaius Marius, but no extant sources reveal when this occurred or where he was even stationed. It is likely that his military tribuneship happened at some point between 130 BC and 120 BC, but there is no way to ascertain where he spent his tour of duty.¹⁶

Much is unknown about Marius' whereabouts during this time. It's highly probable that he served in Rome's legions during much of this ten-year period. As he was deployed across the Mediterranean, he must have continued making valuable business contacts, forming partnerships with equestrians and may have even invested in tax-farming. In ancient Rome, tax collection was primarily outsourced to private contractors, called tax-farmers, from the equestrian class, and they tended to profit heavily from the ventures. It is impossible to know with certainty whether Marius was involved in tax-farming at this stage, but it is certainly plausible.¹⁷

By 120 BC, there was increased tension between the aristocracy and the commoners, and the equestrians were in the ascendant politically.¹⁸ It was in this increasingly hostile environment that Marius returned to Rome and campaigned for the tribunate of the people. In 120 BC, Marius had accumulated the additional wealth needed to canvass for office, and he was surely more recognizable than he was during his first election bid. He had also acquired the solid experience needed for a budding political career and had ample connections with powerful equestrians. He may have even leveraged the *clientela* system. His family was reportedly dependent upon the

influential Caecilius Metellus clan, and Marius' family members were possibly hereditary clients of theirs. The Caecilius Metellus family was a wealthy and illustrious plebeian clan whose ancestors were regularly elected to every level of government.¹⁹ Marius somehow managed to persuade a member of their family into supporting his campaign for the tribuneship, but unfortunately, the identity of Marius' principal patron is unknown. Likely suspects include Lucius Caecilius Metellus Dalmaticus, who was consul in 119 BC, but Dalmaticus' relative, Quintus Caecilius Metellus Balearicus, was also very influential and may have been the one who aided Marius.²⁰

Regardless of which Metellus supported him, Marius was able to persuade a member of their family to aid his election. Metellus may have enthusiastically exhorted his network of clients to vote for Marius, supported his campaign financially and/or publicly endorsed him. While powerful families supported many candidates, it wasn't common for an aristocrat of Metellus' stature to campaign on behalf of just any dependant, which suggests something special about Marius. He and his family must have enjoyed especially close ties with the Caecilius Metellus clan, and Metellus must have been particularly impressed by Marius' character, oratory and military achievements. However, someone as meticulous as Marius wouldn't have settled for garnering the support of a single benefactor. It's very probable that Marius also laboured to enlist the help of his other patrons to ensure his victory.²¹ Between campaigning on his deeds in Numantia, his achievements during his military tribuneship and Metellus' likely instrumental intervention, Marius was officially installed as tribune in 119 BC. This election admitted him to the distinguished senatorial status, but his one-year term at tribune was not without controversy.²²

During his tenure, Marius proposed a bill to reform voting policies, but the nobles believed that if his proposal was adopted, then their power would be diminished to some extent, which infuriated much of the senatorial elite. There's some confusion as to what the measure was meant to accomplish, but it appears to have been a predominantly popular, common-sense reform. It may have amended how jurors cast their votes in judicial cases, and the aristocrats might have thought that it would somehow limit their influence.²³ The bill could have also altered voting locations to limit corruption, bribery and intimidation, or the measure may have reformed both jury and electoral voting.²⁴ Nevertheless, after Marius introduced his proposal, the Senate and Consul Lucius Aurelius Cotta approved a motion that obstructed the

passage of Marius' bill. Like few junior politicians before him, Marius stood firmly before the Senate and demanded that they desist and pass the measure, but he was unable to coax them into acquiescing. The obstinate Marius further demonstrated his mettle by warning Consul Cotta that he would have him arrested unless he yielded to his demands.²⁵

The incredulous and exasperated consul turned to Metellus, likely his co-consul, Caecilius Metellus Dalmaticus. Cotta hoped that Metellus could convince Marius, who was his family's stubborn dependant, to capitulate. However, even Metellus failed to persuade the recalcitrant Marius, who instantly spurned the man who may have aided his election. Marius furiously ordered attendants to arrest Metellus, which must have left the aristocrat stupefied and fearful that this would damage his first-rate reputation. Metellus desperately requested the other nine tribunes to assist and defend him against Marius' threats and demands, but the tribunes were unified behind Marius. Seeing only one option other than embarrassment and jail time, the Senate relented and the voting reform was passed, instantly transforming Marius into a *populares* folk hero.²⁶

However, he was not always a *populares* champion. In 133 BC, the radical tribune, Tiberius Gracchus, passed his signature populist agenda, which included free land for the poor at someone else's expense. The Senate, including Scipio Aemilianus, strenuously opposed his propositions, and a group of senators clubbed Gracchus to death later that year. His legislation, on the other hand, survived and became incredibly popular among the destitute, as did the system of subsidized grain passed by his brother, Gaius Gracchus.²⁷ Within a short period of time, tens of thousands of Romans regularly took advantage of the discounted grain, but not just the poor. The programme was intended to benefit the impoverished, but it was open to all Romans. When it was inaugurated, Gaius Gracchus supposedly spotted a wealthy ex-consul named Lucius Calpurnius Piso Frugi patiently waiting in the grain line, whereupon the tribune chastised him. The former consul had vehemently opposed the legislation, but he remarked to Gaius that if his wealth was to be redistributed, then he intended on at least getting his share.²⁸

The grain dole debate raged on, even into 119 BC. Later in Marius' term as tribune, it seems that legislation to expand the Gracchan grain dole was proposed and had the lower class' full support. Instead of favouring the measure, which was supported by many *populares*

voters, Marius sided with the *optimates* and obstructed the bill's passage, resulting in its demise. It isn't clear whether Marius believed this was a fiscally irresponsible measure and was standing on principle or if this was a conciliatory gesture meant to assuage the *optimates'* hostility towards him. Many of them certainly bore a grudge against Marius following the voting reform episode, and he may have viewed the grain proposal as an opportunity to return to their good graces. Regardless of his motives, through his acts as a tribune, Marius earned the reputation of a political maverick of sorts and gained the respect of both political factions, and likely some ire as well.²⁹ It was clear very early on that Marius took great pains to straddle the classes and political factions, but he wasn't always successful.³⁰

As his term as tribune concluded, Marius chose to remain in the public realm and promote his budding political career. Likely by 117 BC, he campaigned for one of the aedile positions. There were two levels of aediles in ancient Rome, the curule aedile and the plebeian aedile. The curule aedile was the more prestigious of the two, and the ever-ambitious Marius enthusiastically declared his candidacy for it. The historical sources are silent as to whether the Caecilius Metellus clan aided his campaign for the aedileship after Marius publicly threatened and embarrassed one of their family members. It seems unlikely that they would have been eager to support him after that episode. The ancient writers also kept mum as to how Marius, if he was born into poverty, planned to personally bankroll the office's duties, which was often expected of an aedile. Certainly, there were other patrons whom he could attempt to cajole into aiding him, or as modern historians have asserted, he may not have been born quite as poor as he claimed. He could have indeed been of equestrian stock, earned a fortune from scratch or at least obtained the requisite property to borrow the necessary funds.³¹

Nonetheless, his candidacy floundered, and it became clear that Marius' campaign was futile. Therefore, he accepted his impending defeat and withdrew his name from consideration. He had apparently generated more than a few enemies during his tribuneship and may not have received Metellus' backing after his public outbursts. Regardless, he was determined to acquire another office. Later that same day, after he had dropped out of the race, he quickly announced his candidacy for a less prestigious office, the plebeian aedileship, but Plutarch reports that the voters believed that Marius was 'bold and obstinate', which did not bode well for him. By the end of the day, the

votes were tallied and Marius was defeated. Allegedly, up to that period, no Roman politician had ever lost two elections in a single day, a dubious distinction for Marius.³²

He was humbled and left smarting from his dual defeats, but he refused to abandon his political ambitions. In 116 BC, when many Romans had forgotten his embarrassing double loss, he canvassed for the praetorship, which was a step above the aedileship that he had failed to obtain. He must have been considerably wealthy by this period, because bankrolling one praetor and two aedile campaigns in successive years required substantial funds.³³ Nevertheless, Marius was elected to the praetorship, but just barely. He garnered the fewest votes of any of his fellow praetors-elect, but before he could savour his triumph or enjoy the fruits of his office, he was accused of bribing voters and brought to trial. Bribery was technically illegal in old Rome, but that didn't deter many politicians from breaking the law to ensure that they were elected. Usually, politicians were only prosecuted for purchasing votes if their misdeeds were so blatantly obvious that they could not be ignored or one of their adversaries was attempting to undermine their careers.³⁴

Bribery was part of the political process, and both the electorate and politicians acknowledged it. After Marius' death, Cato the Elder's great-grandson, Cato the Younger, evolved into an indefatigable republican champion and the standard bearer for Roman principle. He was disgusted by the rampant bribery and sought to clamp down on its use in 54 BC. He was, however, frustrated because there was no appetite for such a measure. The politicians viewed bribery as an expedient means to success, and the common voters enjoyed the improper attention and gifts. Consequently, the effects of Cato's attempts were short-lived.³⁵

Nevertheless, Marius was accused of electoral bribery. Despite its widespread usage, it was a serious charge. In Marius' case, someone noticed that the slave of Cassius Sabaco, who was Marius' close friend, loitered where the Romans cast their votes. It was alleged that Sabaco's slave was doling out payments for supporting his master's ally, Marius. As a result, Sabaco was summoned to testify at Marius' trial, where he insisted that his slave was only present to deliver a cup of water to his parched master. He claimed that his slave then left forthwith and expended no bribes. The court wasn't convinced, and the incoming censors, who expelled Sabaco from the Senate the following year, likely weren't either.³⁶

The prosecuting attorney, who in those days was a privately retained and paid lawyer, aimed to strengthen his case against Marius. Next, he subpoenaed Gaius Herennius to appear in court and submit to cross-examination. The prosecutor must have summoned him believing that he had witnessed the crime, but Herennius was one of Marius' patrons. Herennius clearly stated that by law he was not permitted to testify against Marius because of the *clientela* agreement. Marius, however, strangely challenged Herennius' claim and insisted that he could indeed testify against him. Marius asserted that as an elected praetor, he was freed from the client/patron relationship's obligations, but Marius wasn't entirely correct. Certain magistracies, including the praetorship, released clients from the patronage system, but Marius likely hadn't been installed as a praetor yet. He was only a praetor-elect, which presumably meant that Herennius was still his patron and was therefore barred from being deposed during the proceedings. Why Marius wanted Herennius to testify is a mystery. Perhaps, he thought that his patron's testimony would help his case, or maybe his ego pressed him to desire to be publicly recognized as no man's client. Nonetheless, Herennius was prohibited from testifying. The prosecutor must have been disappointed but still optimistic that Marius would be convicted, because since the opening of the trial, the jurors seemed antagonistic towards Marius. Yet, on the last day of the legal proceedings, the jury absolved him of any wrongdoing by a tie vote.³⁷

With his name cleared of misconduct, Marius was installed as one of the praetors of 115 BC, and he performed an acceptable, albeit not an altogether exemplary job. It appears that after a turbulent tribuneship and two failed aedile campaigns, he opted for a quiet and noncontroversial praetorship, possibly in another attempt to mollify the *optimates* who disliked him.³⁸ He did, however, complete his term with enough satisfaction to be appointed to govern the Roman province of Hispania Ulterior (Further Spain) the following year. Further Spain was one of the regions that Rome acquired after defeating Carthage. The region was rich in precious metals, but the Romans believed that uncivilized savages populated the province. By most accounts, it was overrun by robbers, which presented new challenges for the ascendant Marius.³⁹ The fact that he was appointed to Further Spain is probably proof that he had won over many of his fellow senators, and even a few key *optimates*. Numerous politicians coveted the post, and Marius couldn't have obtained it without considerable senatorial backing and some support from the *optimates*.

Nevertheless, he was awarded the governorship, set off for Spain and embraced the new opportunity.⁴⁰

Most Roman governors exploited the indigenous population's wealth and extracted the land's resources to their own benefit. It was a perk for politicians and the ultimate goal of many governors. Likewise, Marius could have easily enriched himself by plundering the province's vast silver mines, but it appears that he governed with honour. He spent much of his time assiduously clearing the region of bandits, and apparently, he did not unfairly profit from the locals. By the end of his governorship, perhaps in late 113 BC, he returned to Rome purportedly in no better financial standing than before, which is still open to debate.⁴¹ However, it seems highly likely that he spent large portions of his tenure as governor investing in Spain's mines, engaging in local business transactions and ingratiating himself with the local power brokers.⁴²

When Marius arrived in Rome, he won increasing acclaim for his honour and deeds in Spain, and he was appreciated by the masses for his humble lifestyle and common way of speaking, which was to be expected considering his provincial upbringing.⁴³ While many ancient writers presented Marius as a man who spoke like an ordinary commoner, his speeches, which were likely reproduced after his death, do not appear to have been composed by an uneducated and ineloquent man. Regardless of his oratory style, Marius was widely admired, and according to at least one source, he served every post that he had acquired with such distinction that he earned the privilege of higher offices. Even though he had achieved numerous impressive feats and ably fulfilled his posts' duties, he allegedly had no designs just yet for Rome's highest post, the consulship.⁴⁴

There are some pretty obvious gaps in Marius' early life, and that reflects the historical documents' limits and should not be misconstrued as Marius being inactive. He was an incredibly ambitious young man, and inaction simply runs counter to his character. He was likely involved in a variety of enterprises when he wasn't serving as military tribune, tribune of the people, praetor or governor. During these under-documented periods, Marius may have been involved in the military and/or busy shepherding his financial investments and engaging in tax-farming in order to bankroll his burgeoning political career.⁴⁵

At some point, he must have returned to Arpinum to tend to family affairs and perhaps his father's business. It appears that while he was

there, he attempted to seek a local political office but was surprisingly defeated. This must have occurred very early in his career if it happened at all. There are also sparse references to him being elected to the quaestorship. This could have been accomplished before or after he was installed as tribune of the people, but unfortunately, there are no dates or details corresponding to these events.⁴⁶ Some modern academics have assigned his possible quaestorship to between 123 BC and 121 BC, but that is purely conjecture.⁴⁷

Despite the written record's deficiencies, it's beyond doubt that Marius was a senator and a rising star, and his acclaim and popularity caught the eyes of many. He grew increasingly close to the equestrian class very early in his career, and he hobnobbed with some of Rome's most distinguished families.⁴⁸ He formed an especially close relationship with an ancient patrician family that traced its lineage to one of Aeneas' sons named Julius.⁴⁹ They also, not so humbly, claimed to be the descendants of the goddess Venus. This branch of the family had an illustrious past but had waned both politically and financially to some extent in Marius' era, but they were clearly attracted to his growing fortune.⁵⁰ If Marius married into such a family, then he could combine his bright future with their distinguished past, which he promptly did. Probably as early as 113 BC or as late as 110 BC, he married a patrician woman named Julia. She had likely been married at least once before and previously bore a son named Granius, whom Marius seemed to have treated well enough. Her name might be lost to us if it were not for her husband and nephew's international fame. Her brother's son just so happened to be the legendary Gaius Julius Caesar, who eventually viewed Marius as a role model.⁵¹

Marriage among the Roman political and aristocratic classes was not always consummated out of love. They were more or less business deals that bound families, pooled their influence and increased their clout. That is not to say that some marriages weren't borne out of love or that non-romantic marriages didn't result in it. Oftentimes, love simply was not the main goal. Julius Caesar, for example, created a powerful political alliance in 59 BC by betrothing his daughter, Julia, to one of the greatest men of his era, Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, also known as Pompey the Great. It was nothing more than a calculated political transaction, but Pompey and Julia fell madly in love with one another nonetheless. While love was not required or even expected in many ancient Roman marriages, it was a nice perk if it developed.⁵²

Like today, there were both happy and unhappy marriages, but

unlike the modern era, there wasn't a stringent expectation to remain especially faithful. Romans were not necessarily sticklers for fidelity. This principally related to men, but wives engaged in illicit affairs too. It was commonplace for husbands in the upper classes to maintain mistresses in addition to a wife, and philandering was more or less acceptable among men well into their late thirties. Married women did not enjoy the same leeway as men, but they were involved in their share of affairs. Also like the modern era, troubled marriages existed, and divorces remedied many of the unfortunate unions. Even though infidelity was a relatively frequent occurrence, it was sometimes used to justify divorces, which were quite common and easy to obtain. However, husbands were often required to repay the wives' wedding dowries after their divorces. None of the ancient authors ever commented on whether Marius and Julia enjoyed a happy or affectionate marriage, but the union lasted until Marius' death.⁵³

Marriages in this era tended to follow one of two possible ceremonies. The more antiquated and traditional ritual began with the bride dressing at her home, where mostly female attendants helped her style her hair, which was separated into six locks. They carefully dressed her in an elaborate outfit that was specifically designed for the occasion and fastened a special belt around her, which the groom would of course unfasten later on. As she anxiously prepared, the husband-to-be travelled to her home, and upon his arrival, he took her hand and pledged his faithfulness to her, a promise frequently broken. Accompanied by children and family members, the excited couple then proceeded to a nearby altar, where a beast was sacrificed. A diviner examined the animal's organs for abnormalities, and if none were discovered, then the seer declared the gods' blessing for the couple's union. After the bride and groom traded their nuptial oaths, they were married, but on occasions, the new husband feigned pulling his wife from her reluctant mother's arms, as if he was stealing her away. This was done in jest and was fun for all.

The families then followed the couple to the groom's home as they made wisecracks and perhaps ribald jokes targeting the bridegroom. When they arrived, they halted at the groom's front door, which the bride ceremonially anointed. Then the husband ritually asked what her given name was, but women weren't provided a *praenomen* like men were in ancient Rome.⁵⁴ They were simply called by the female version of their family *nomen*. Hence, a female from the Julian clan was named Julia.⁵⁵ So, the bride gazed into the groom's eyes and

romantically responded, 'Wherever you are Gaius, I will be Gaia.' At that point, the husband swept her off of her feet and carried her across the threshold and into his home, where the families feasted. Following their celebratory meal, the couple walked into the bedroom, where the groom unfastened her belt, which signalled that it was time for the relatives to quickly be on their way.⁵⁶

Increasingly though, Romans were opting for much simpler weddings. These provided the same function but were considerably more mundane. Instead of performing a series of complex rituals surrounded by their families, many simply exchanged their vows and considered themselves married. Sometimes they had their union and marriage contract legally legitimized, likely in the presence of a Roman official, but this wasn't required to be considered married in Rome. Nevertheless, whichever wedding format the couple opted for, it frequently included a hefty dowry being given to the groom, at least in wealthy circles.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, it is impossible to learn which matrimonial ceremony Marius and Julia chose, but their marriage was nonetheless built to last. They likely conceived a child together – although it is possible that he was adopted – who was also named Gaius Marius. He was probably born around 109 BC, when his father was around 47 or 48, but the elder Marius was absent for much of his son's early life. Opportunities arose and the state required his assistance, keeping him away from Rome for several years.⁵⁸

IV

JUGURTHA

'A city for sale and doomed to speedy destruction if it finds a purchaser!'

– Jugurtha

Marius' rise to prominence was inextricably linked to the fate of Rome's one-time ally, Jugurtha, who had mercilessly clawed his way to power in Numidia. Following Jugurtha's return from Numantia, he fortified and augmented his political position by capitalizing on his recent exploits and his support from Rome. The Numidian king, Micipsa, had little choice but to reluctantly declare Jugurtha co-heir to the throne alongside the monarch's biological sons, Adherbal and Hiempsal.¹ By around 118 BC, after ruling for decades, King Micipsa died, presumably of natural causes. To ensure a smooth transition, the three princes convened to delineate their respective spheres of influence and agree on an equitable power-sharing agreement. They resolved to divide the Numidian kingdom into three essentially equal parts, one for each prince. However, Jugurtha never intended on sharing anything, let alone authority. Shortly after the conference, he learned that his adopted brother and joint heir, Hiempsal, was relaxing in a home belonging to one of Jugurtha's close associates in the Numidian town of Thirmita. Because of his relationship, Jugurtha's operatives were able to obtain entry into the villa. When they stormed the estate, they killed several within the household and discovered the frightened Hiempsal taking shelter in a servant's chamber. He was ruthlessly slain without demure, and his severed head was delivered to Jugurtha, who was undoubtedly pleased by the sight.²

Jugurtha's opprobrium became widely known and prompted his surviving co-heir, Adherbal, to frantically dispatch emissaries to Rome to solicit assistance. Rome served as a mediator because it was the most powerful Mediterranean state and enjoyed a very close relationship with Numidia. Rome had, after all, permitted Numidia's rise following the Second Punic War. Adherbal realized that Rome could solve the crisis, but his envoy arrived far too late to be effective because Jugurtha had already mobilized his army and began to absorb additional Numidian cities in Adherbal's realm. Adherbal recognized the dire situation and prepared for the inevitable war with his adopted

brother. He armed his troops, who outnumbered Jugurtha's army, but when they clashed, Adherbal's force was routed. Without the protection of his military, he fled to Rome, seeking sanctuary and pleading for justice.³

Jugurtha feared Rome's wrath, but he believed that a strategy of leveraging his popularity with the Romans and lying and bribing power brokers would ultimately prevail. Ignoring the sound advice given to him by Scipio Aemilianus, he sent representatives to Rome to purchase the senatorial elite's favour, and, in a short period of time, many swiftly became his ardent supporters, which surely disgusted Marius.⁴ Jugurtha also had other advantages related to his close relationship with Aemilianus, who had since died. During the Numantine conflict, Aemilianus brought hundreds of his friends and clients to the battlefield. Many of whom surely became influential by the time Jugurtha was king. Therefore, once Jugurtha assumed the Numidian throne, he must have personally known many of the current Roman senators and power brokers because of their shared Spanish experiences. As a result, numerous Roman aristocrats may have even considered Jugurtha a friend. The Numidian probably counted on these Romans to defend him against Adherbal's complaints. Furthermore, some of Aemilianus' former clients who had accompanied him on the Numantine tour probably still held their patron in high esteem, even though he was deceased. Aemilianus was very close to Jugurtha, and out of deference to their former patron, Aemilianus' former clients may have wished to avoid passing any sort of harsh judgment against Jugurtha, which bode well for the unruly Numidian king.⁵

Once the senators were bribed and surely reminded of Jugurtha's intimate relationship with Aemilianus, the Senate was convened to settle the worsening Numidian dispute. Adherbal and Jugurtha's emissaries attended the meeting, but Jugurtha's cronies were armed with pre-planned excuses. They exclaimed that Hiempsal was killed by his Numidian subjects who were weary of his barbarism and that Adherbal had wantonly waged war against the innocent Jugurtha. The weight of the deceit and bribes surpassed that of justice as the Senate decided against punishing the recalcitrant Jugurtha. Instead, they decreed that Numidia should be divided evenly between Jugurtha and Adherbal. A delegation of ten Romans was vested with the authority to partition the kingdom fairly. Yet, Jugurtha was able to bribe the majority of the commissioners, securing the most populous and arable

land for his realm and the less favourable regions for Adherbal. Jugurtha learned the lesson that Rome's ruling elite was largely corrupt and could easily be purchased for the right price.

The division of Numidia was one of the best possible outcomes that Jugurtha could have expected from Rome, but he privately refused to accept the partition as a final solution. He coveted supremacy over Numidia and was determined to unite the kingdom under his sole dominion. So, he began raiding Adherbal's domain, hoping to provoke a military reaction that he could exploit. He planned to present himself as a victimized ruler in order to justify war with his adopted brother. However, Adherbal was wise to his co-ruler's schemes and refused to grant Jugurtha the pretences for war. When Jugurtha's strategy proved faulty, he terminated the charade, invaded Adherbal's territory in earnest and waged open war without just cause.

Adherbal first sent messengers to Rome to plead for their assistance, but the Jugurthine threat was imminent. Without any other viable options, Adherbal once again raised an army to halt Jugurtha's rapid advance. Near the city of Cirta, both armies encamped, believing that the battle would be on the following day, but Jugurtha cleverly launched a surprise assault under the cloak of darkness and destroyed Adherbal's unsuspecting army. The defeated co-ruler fled for a second time, but on this occasion, he sought refuge within Cirta, where he was saved by Italian merchants who defended him against the Jugurthine attackers.

Surely drawing from his valuable Numantine experience with Scipio Aemilianus and Marius, Jugurtha hastily prepared to lay siege to Cirta. He hoped that the town would fall before Rome could respond to Adherbal's envoys, but the Republic's answer arrived much sooner than he had anticipated. Their message was clear. Adherbal and Jugurtha's violence should cease immediately. The Senate also dispatched three Roman representatives to investigate Adherbal's accusations, as well as to demand answers from Jugurtha. When the Romans appeared, Jugurtha excused his actions as an act of self-defence because, he insisted, Adherbal had plotted against him, which was clearly a lie.

When the envoy departed, he resumed the siege of Cirta forthwith and increased its ferocity, but two of Adherbal's subordinates somehow managed to escape the blockaded city and travelled to Rome to beseech the Republic to intervene. Rome's patience with Jugurtha was rapidly wearing thin. The Numidian king's disobedience and

unprovoked warfare prompted many Romans to urge military action against him, but a declaration of war was not approved by the Senate because many of its members were in Jugurtha's pay. Nonetheless, another commission was dispatched to Numidia to examine the situation and insist that Jugurtha cease his bellicose ways. When they arrived, Jugurtha masterfully employed delaying tactics to provide the necessary time to achieve his military goals. While diplomatic channels were bogged down by his insincere overtures for peace, Jugurtha strived to manoeuvre politically and militarily to a more favourable position. In the end, however, he failed to comply with the Romans' demands, and he turned his full attention towards capturing Cirta.⁶

Cirta had been defended by a large contingent of Italians, but they grew exhausted by the conflict and starvation caused by the extended siege.⁷ Eventually, they urged Adherbal to surrender himself to Jugurtha on the precondition that he would not be harmed. The Italians were confident that Jugurtha would not dare injure or even mistreat them because of Rome's reputation as a superpower that protected its own subjects and allies.⁸ As a result, at some point in 112 BC, Adherbal complied with their demands against his better judgment, surrendering himself to his adopted brother. Once Adherbal was in his custody, Jugurtha ordered his adopted brother to be painfully tortured to death. The town's people also submitted to Jugurtha, believing that they were safeguarded by Rome's prominence, but Jugurtha slaughtered a myriad of its inhabitants anyway, including many Italians who were deemed to be combatants. For Rome, this egregious affront could not be countenanced. Jugurtha had ignored Rome's will and needlessly massacred Roman subjects.⁹

Most Romans refused to condone Jugurtha's provocations, but not every faction clamoured to invade Numidia. Clearly, most of the Senate preferred not to become bogged down in a costly punitive war in Numidia, but the equestrians, proletariat and perhaps Marius himself increasingly called for it. By late 112 BC or early 111 BC, Roman officials finally declared war on Jugurtha. One of the two consuls of 111 BC, Lucius Calpurnius Bestia, was assigned to collect an army and lead the Numidian expedition. At first, the Numidian king was stunned by Rome's reaction, and he immediately sent his son and two companions to Rome to ease the situation with golden gifts. However, Jugurtha had finally overplayed his hand, and the Roman Senate subsequently refused to entertain his envoys' petitions, instead

ordering them to leave Italy within ten days.¹⁰

Upon landing in Africa, Bestia initiated an energetic campaign and captured several Numidian cities, but the Roman advances were only temporary. Before long, Jugurtha bribed both Bestia and his lieutenant, Scaurus, into accepting a very lenient 'surrender', even though Rome had not directed or empowered them to form a treaty.¹¹ To finalize the unapproved peace agreement, the king produced a brief excuse for his actions, and as punishment, he donated thirty elephants, some livestock and a negligible amount of silver to Rome. Then he returned to ruling over his kingdom. As far as Jugurtha and Bestia were concerned, Rome and Numidia were at peace, but the agreement's terms and the consul's overt acceptance of bribes infuriated many Romans. Unbeknownst to the Roman people, the situation was much worse. Many legionaries were even accepting payments in various forms from Jugurtha.

The Romans were incensed with Bestia's mild peace agreement and his flagrant corruption, and they demanded justice. Jugurtha was therefore summoned to Rome, with immunity from punishment, to testify against those whom he had bribed. Government officials naively expected the Numidian to publicly disclose all of the Romans whom he had influenced with lavish gifts. A praetor, Lucius Cassius Longinus, was sent to transport the king to Rome, and Jugurtha obediently complied and set sail for Italy. When he arrived at the hearing, he was derided and accused of many crimes in front of the raucous crowd, and he was challenged to respond to the allegations and produce a list of those in his pay. However, he had previously purchased the allegiance of Gaius Baebius, a tribune of the people, who used his veto power to prevent the king from replying to any public inquiries, thus ending the proceeding without Roman satisfaction.¹²

Meanwhile, Spurius Albinus, a consul in 110 BC, had located a living descendant of Jugurtha's grandfather, Masinissa, in Rome. The Numidian was named Massiva, and Albinus had intended to present him as an alternative to Jugurtha for the Numidian throne. Jugurtha wasn't willing to risk this possibility. While he was in Rome, he ordered his deputy, Bomilcar, to murder Massiva using any means necessary. Discretion was preferred but not required by the Numidian king. Bomilcar hired assassins, and they successfully, albeit carelessly, killed Massiva, which promptly led the Roman authorities to apprehend Bomilcar. Blood was publicly on the hands of both

Jugurtha and Bomilcar, but before Bomilcar could be tried, he posted bail, which ensured his temporary release. Jugurtha feared that if he deserted Bomilcar after his loyal service, then his core adherents' support might falter. Therefore, Jugurtha successfully arranged to smuggle him out of Rome. When the Romans realized what had transpired, they were seething with fury at the king's belligerence and lawlessness, and they swiftly expelled him from their domain. As he departed, he gazed at the eternal city and scoffed, 'A city for sale and doomed to speedy destruction if it finds a purchaser!'¹³

Bestia's settlement with Jugurtha was considered illegitimate by most, and following the aforementioned events, Rome refocussed on warring with Jugurtha. Consul Spurius Albinus was placed in charge of Rome's African forces, but when he attempted to renew hostilities with Jugurtha, the king's cunning and delaying tactics undermined his plans. Jugurtha repeatedly created crafty excuses to prevent battle, including assuring his own surrender, and then conveniently changing his mind. After an unsuccessful campaign season, Albinus was recalled to Rome to fulfill his consular duty of overseeing elections. As he departed, he left his brother, Aulus Postumius Albinus, in command of the 40,000-man army encamped in winter quarters.¹⁴

The elections were considerably delayed due to domestic political infighting, which became a frequent pattern in Rome, and this senseless deadlock effectively left the Republican army without a capable leader. However, Aulus, driven by boredom and ambition, sensed an opportunity for greatness, and regrettably seized it.¹⁵ In 110 or 109 BC, he set out to either defeat Jugurtha on the battlefield or induce a hefty bribe from the wealthy king. In the midst of the African winter, Aulus marched his army from its camp and began to lay siege to Suthul, which may be modern-day Guelma in Algeria.¹⁶ Yet, the weather and Suthul's formidable defences prevented Aulus from seizing it. He remained hopeful of a favourable outcome, but Aulus was easily outwitted by Jugurtha. The king arrived, feigned retreat and lured Aulus into the Numidian hinterland. Aulus ignorantly followed Jugurtha and fell directly into the king's trap. Unbeknownst to the oblivious Aulus, Jugurtha had previously laid the groundwork for a guaranteed victory by secretly bribing Aulus' senior officers and centurions to either abandon the legions or leave the camp's entrances unguarded. One night, Jugurtha surrounded the Roman bivouac and adjusted his final plan of attack.

When Jugurtha's preparations were complete, the Numidians

stormed the lightly defended and unprepared Roman camp, which was an easy target due to the king's bribery. In the face of total defeat, the Romans retreated in disorder and sought refuge on a nearby hill. The next day, Aulus recognized that he was without recourse and was forced to accept the king's peace terms. First, the Romans were required to march under the yoke, which was a humiliating symbol of defeat and submission, and then Aulus and his army were ordered to leave Numidia within ten days. Aulus may have agreed to the terms, but the Senate considered the peace accord illegitimate and therefore, invalid.¹⁷

Romans had marched under the yoke before in one of Roman history's most disgraceful moments. In 321 BC, after suffering an embarrassing tactical defeat at the hands of the Samnites – a fierce Italian tribe – an entire Roman army surrendered and tentatively agreed to the Samnites' terms. First, the Romans were stripped of all weapons and clothing, save one article, perhaps a loincloth. Then they were forced to march under the yoke to show their submission to the Samnites. The yoke was probably an arrangement of three spears that the soldiers walked under, but they likely had to meekly bow to pass through, which exacerbated the already humiliating circumstances. The second term was that Rome was compelled to withdraw from its advanced colonies near the Samnites' territory. The disgraced legionaries subsequently returned to Rome bereft of weapons, armour and much of their clothing. When Aulus' Roman army surrendered and passed under the yoke in Numidia, it surely reminded those in Rome of their history's shameful chapter.¹⁸

METELLUS

'All men, [Metellus] said, should not covet all things.'

Gaius Sallustius Crispus

Jugurtha had humiliated Rome, and its citizens were concerned for the Republic's wellbeing and declining reputation. In response, they elected Quintus Caecilius Metellus to the consulship of 109 BC. He was a man of 'unblemished reputation', according to Sallust, and was probably a close relative of the Caecilius Metellus who instrumentally helped Marius canvass for the tribunate. Upon attaining the consulship, Metellus was additionally awarded command of the complicated Jugurthine War, but before he travelled to Africa to confront Jugurtha, he enlisted new officers and recruits to reinforce the demoralized army. Surprisingly, he also appointed Marius as one of his legates, a senior military post, even though Marius had publicly threatened to imprison one of his relatives. Perhaps the rift between Marius and the Caecilius Metellus family was not as dramatic as ancient writers presented, or maybe time had healed the family's wounds and brought the two together once more.¹ However, other motives may have prompted Metellus to select Marius as his deputy. Metellus hailed from a venerable aristocratic family, but he grasped the equestrian's growing political importance. Metellus probably thought that if he selected someone like Marius with strong equestrian ties to a senior military post, then the equestrians might perceive the act as a goodwill gesture. In turn, Metellus must have believed that this would lead to higher favourability among the equestrians and broader political alliances.²

Still, other factors might have influenced Metellus to offer Marius the leadership role. If Marius and his family were indeed once clients of the Caecilius Metellus clan, then his assignment may have simply been a favour doled out to Marius by his former patron. However, it seems quite plausible that somehow Marius and the Caecilius Metellus family reconciled their differences, in part because Marius encapsulated the kind of leadership that Metellus needed to ensure that he had a productive campaign. Jugurtha had outsmarted or corrupted every general sent to defeat him, but Marius was a proven military leader who exuded many virtuous traits. He had honourably

and successfully fought in Numantia and served as a military tribune. He had also ably defended and admirably governed Further Spain without greedily draining it of its wealth, and unlike many of the politicians of his time, there is no evidence to suggest that he had ever accepted bribes or was guided by blind avarice at this point. In fact, Marius seemed to have been proud of his purported rustic roots. Furthermore, Marius had served alongside Jugurtha in Numantia and may have even known him well enough to provide insight into the king's psyche. Considering Marius' character, experience and knowledge, he appeared to have been tailor-made for the war with Jugurtha. Combined with the fact that Marius was viewed favourably by the equestrian class, Metellus seemed to have made a wise, calculated decision.

Given that Marius' political career appears to have stalled by this period of his life, Metellus' offer was a great opportunity for Marius, both politically and financially. While the ancient sources claim that he bore no consular ambitions just yet, a prominent position in a major warzone could easily propel him back into the limelight. If he served with distinction, then his public profile would be raised and he could reasonably consider campaigning for a higher office. The appointment could also be quite lucrative and provide a bevy of new African business contacts and leads. Barring a humiliating failure or an untimely death, Metellus' proposition was incredibly promising, and Marius astutely perceived the post's potential as he readily accepted the opportunity.

When Metellus arrived in Africa in 109 BC, he was dismayed by the undisciplined and craven nature of the legions, which Jugurtha had previously forced to march under the yoke. Even though Rome desired a swift conclusion to the embarrassing conflict, Metellus was forced to retrain the troops and institute some semblance of order, which must have pleased Marius considering his appreciation of strict discipline. In fact, Marius may have been the one to first suggest that the army desperately needed to be rehabilitated before experiencing combat.³ Nevertheless, Metellus, likely with Marius' aid, relentlessly drilled and reconditioned the soldiers with harshness but without cruelty.⁴

Metellus' strategy was probably outlined while he was still in Rome, but as he and Marius whipped their legionaries into fighting form, his plan was surely revised as it gradually took shape. The war wasn't really against the Numidian kingdom itself, but Jugurtha. He was solely responsible for the detestable transgressions that sparked

the conflict, and because of this, Metellus' singular goal was to neutralize the king, not conquer Numidia. Therefore, Metellus set out to capture Jugurtha through various means. First, he planned to attempt to persuade the king's intimates to betray Jugurtha and surrender him to the Romans. If that didn't immediately succeed, then he would invade Numidia, capture various cities and lay waste to the countryside. Through these methods, he hoped to turn the Numidian people against Jugurtha, remove many of the king's safe havens, siphon some of the monarch's resources away from him and force a pitched battle with Jugurtha. Metellus probably assumed that these means would facilitate Jugurtha's ultimate fall. With Metellus' plan in place and his troops readying for combat, the consul fixed his sights on the Numidian king.⁵

After Jugurtha learned of Metellus' reputation for fidelity and honour, he sank into despair, fearing that a Roman whom he could not defeat or purchase was finally sent to vanquish him. He may have also become especially concerned once he learned that his former comrade in arms from Numantia, Marius, was advising Metellus. Nevertheless, he likely attempted his tried-and-true method of bribery to win Metellus over anyway, but that clearly ended in failure. Therefore, he dispatched suppliant emissaries to plead for his family's lives as well as his own, but Metellus was fully cognizant of Jugurtha's duplicity and knack for exploiting diplomatic channels to his own benefit. Without providing the king an answer, Metellus attempted to persuade the envoys to turn against Jugurtha. Even though they were reportedly open to the idea, this endeavour bore Metellus no immediate fruit.⁶ In fact, as the crafty Jugurtha learned of his subordinates' disloyalty, he ordered their executions without demur.⁷

Following the ineffectual conferences with Jugurtha's representatives in 109 BC, Metellus, alongside his deputy, Marius, began his Numidian invasion, only to find the kingdom in a state of relative peace and unprepared for war. Metellus observed no hostilities. Farmers were at the till, and shopkeepers manned their stores. Numidian townsfolk even warmly greeted Metellus and offered to provide his army with necessities as if they were allies. However, the ever-cautious consul did not let his guard down. He proceeded to march through the countryside at the head of his army, with Marius guarding the rear with a cavalry unit. During their slow advance, more Jugurthine emissaries reached Metellus with the same message as before. Jugurtha was willing to surrender in exchange for mercy.

Again, Metellus neither accepted nor refused Jugurtha's overtures, but once more, the consul tried to turn the monarch's representatives against him, without any notable successes. Following these meetings, Metellus somehow gained control of the major Numidian trading centre of Vaga and subsequently garrisoned it with a small contingent of legionaries. Today, Vaga is known as Béja, and it is settled in the sloping hills of northern Tunisia. After Metellus' capture of Vaga, the Numidian king realized that the Roman commander was resorting to his own tactics. He was refusing to verbally commit to war or peace while using the diplomatic talks as a diversion to allow him to manoeuvre into favorable positions.⁸

Jugurtha determined that his only recourse was to meet Metellus and Marius on the battlefield. Therefore, he amended his mostly successful Roman strategy, which centred largely on trickery and inducements. It seems highly unlikely that he entirely abandoned attempts to bribe Metellus and/or Rome into accepting a lenient settlement, but as time progressed, it appeared that no amount of gold or silver could temper Rome's resolve. He had also previously exploited diplomatic negotiations to his advantage, but he certainly wasn't finished attempting to capitalize on them. Bribery and a perverted use of diplomacy were probably his preferred methods, but failing these, he was prepared for a war of attrition. He had an immense reservoir of wealth and a large population of military-aged males. He hoped that this would permit him to protract the war just long enough to either deliver a knockout blow to Rome or cause the Republic to lose interest in the conflict.

Jugurtha knew Rome's military tactics since he served with Scipio Aemilianus and Marius in Numantia, and because of this experience, he understood that his Numidian soldiers were no match for the disciplined legionaries under normal circumstances. To counter this disadvantage, he planned to avoid set-piece battles on equal terms with the Romans if at all possible. He preferred to rely on ambushes, guerrilla tactics, superior military intelligence and his familiarity with the Numidian countryside to his advantage. He hoped by employing this strategy and only engaging the Roman army when he was at an extreme advantage that he would ultimately prevail.

To achieve his goals and respond to Metellus' advances, Jugurtha mobilized an enormous army and used his superior knowledge of his kingdom's terrain to bypass the marching Roman legions. Then he hand-picked a battle site that favoured his strengths and negated

Rome's advantages. He positioned his troops on a hill in an unpopulated barren wasteland in south-east Numidia about 20 miles from the River Muthul. He had learned that Metellus' army would soon be marching through the region, and he sought to conceal his tremendous force in order to ambush the Roman cavalcade. However, Jugurtha was unable to entirely obscure his army's location, and Metellus spotted the Numidian force and planned accordingly. He augmented his right flank, which was closest to the enemy force, and shifted the cavalry to the army's wings. He placed Marius behind what was once the front line, and Metellus led the cavalry on the left wing. Metellus also wisely realized that his men wouldn't last long in Africa if they were cut off from water, and he promptly sought to allay this concern. He dispatched one of his deputies, Publius Rutilius Rufus, with a contingent of troops to occupy a campsite near the Muthul River to secure the legionaries a water source.

The Romans' main force carefully advanced in formation, and as Metellus marched by the hill where Jugurtha lay in wait, the king sprung his attack. The Numidian arranged his soldiers so that they were extended beyond the Roman lines in the hope that they might be able to envelop the legionaries, and they were partially concealed by the hill's vegetation. This prevented Metellus from fully comprehending Jugurtha's plans or the full scale of his army. Regardless of Metellus' impromptu alterations, the Romans were unprepared for Jugurtha's assault. As soon as the bulk of the Roman legions passed by the first of the Numidians, Jugurtha dispatched 2,000 infantrymen towards the Romans' rear to block their retreat. Then he unleashed his frontal assault. He used the high ground to his advantage, harassed the Romans from a distance with missiles and was able to isolate portions of the Roman lines, leaving them vulnerable to his onslaught. His cavalry sortied towards the Romans and inflicted considerable damage, but as soon as the Roman cavalry countered, the Numidian horsemen safely dispersed.

The legionaries weren't accustomed to Jugurtha's mode of warfare, and they were under severe duress. The Numidians aggressively attacked the Romans from afar using arrows and slings, and they employed quick strikes followed by retreats so that the legionaries could not effectively fight back. For much of the day, confusion reigned in the Roman lines as they engaged in fierce, albeit disorganized combat until Metellus and presumably Marius regained control of the situation, formed ordered ranks and adjusted their

strategy. Metellus explained to the legionaries that their only chance for survival was to defeat the Numidians because there was no camp where they could retreat, and this invigorated his weary troops. He exhorted his exhausted men to charge the hill that was providing the Numidians refuge. As the fatigued legions boldly commenced their offensive, the two armies clashed in an intense confrontation. A collision of swords, a hail of spears and deafening battle cries ensued, but the Roman determination, discipline and superior close-quarter fighting abilities were the invaluable advantages that won the day. Finally, the Numidian lines broke and Jugurtha's army withdrew, with most surviving the battle.

Meanwhile, Metellus' deputy, Rufus, was guarding an advanced position near a water source, but Jugurtha had sent his lieutenant, Bomilcar, to overrun the camp. Bomilcar charged Rufus' position with his war elephants, and the dust clouds that the beasts created initially perplexed the Romans. They believed that the wind had stirred up the desert's dirt, not an army, but as the cloud grew larger and nearer, they discovered that Bomilcar was rapidly advancing towards their camp. Once the Romans realized that their position was under attack, they reformed lines and prepared for the assault. The Numidians relied on their elephants to provide their foot soldiers with protection, but the beasts reacted poorly once they became encumbered by the flora and were surrounded and harassed by the Romans. Consequently, Bomilcar's men quickly lost heart. They flung their swords and shields aside and quickly retreated to safety, but the elephants weren't so lucky, with four being captured and the remaining forty slaughtered.

By the end of the day, Rufus and Metellus had been successful, but the Romans' dual victories nearly resulted in disaster. As dusk approached, Rufus became concerned by Metellus' tardiness. The general hadn't arrived at the camp, and Rufus believed that the commander might be imperilled. Consequently, he set out to find Metellus and relieve him if necessary. Little did he know that Metellus had been triumphant and was simultaneously marching towards his position. The two armies nearly came to blows because the night's darkness concealed their identities, but before a battle erupted, their cavalries discovered that they were not the enemy.

Both Metellus and Rufus had been victorious, even though a great number of Numidians escaped mostly unscathed. Metellus wished to follow up on the hard-fought battle and vanquish Jugurtha's dispirited

army. So, following the day's events, Metellus dispatched spies to locate the enemy army's location, but they were curiously nowhere to be found. Unbeknownst to Metellus, the Numidians had the unfortunate habit of disbanding and deserting their kings after being routed. This meant that defeated Numidian monarchs faced the hardship of raising new armies following demoralizing losses. While Jugurtha had been bested, he was not broken, but he was forced to levy a fresh army. However, the ever-capable Jugurtha was able to recruit a force that was even larger than before.

After Metellus' victory, he realized that a strategy of seeking pitched battles wouldn't defeat a leader like Jugurtha. Even when the Numidian experienced a battlefield setback, his soldiers were able to escape into the wilderness mostly unharmed, and he was capable of raising new armies at will. Therefore, Metellus embarked on a new plan whereby he captured towns, set fire to strongholds, killed military-aged males, ravaged the countryside and permitted his men to plunder Numidia with impunity. In this way, he garrisoned many cities, struck fear into Jugurtha's kingdom and tightened the noose around the king, who lost precious resources and his subjects' support. Yet, contrary to Metellus' plan, this added pressure didn't immediately influence Jugurtha to consider surrender or force the monarch to commit any grievous errors.

Jugurtha knew that he was no match for Rome in set-piece engagements. His recent experiences proved that even with superior numbers and advantageous positions, he could not defeat Metellus' disciplined Roman legions in pitched battles. However, Metellus' new stratagem still demanded a response from Jugurtha because the Romans were ravaging and terrorizing his kingdom, which genuinely concerned the king. Therefore, he began employing guerrilla tactics. Jugurtha led an elite cavalry corps to shadow the Romans and harry them when it was convenient and opportune. Frequently, when a handful of legionaries fell behind the Roman cavalcade, Jugurtha launched assaults and then swiftly dispersed before a counter-attack could be organized. He even resorted to poisoning springs and wasting livestock where he next suspected the Romans to appear. He frustrated the Romans' plans and became a perpetual nuisance who granted them no respite. His guerrilla war began to weigh heavily on the legions, affecting both Metellus and Marius, whose troops were targeted by these attacks.

Following the previous Roman generals' failures, corruption and

ineptitude in the Jugurthine War, the Senate and the people of Rome were overwhelmed with delight by Metellus' recent successes, even though these weren't exactly decisive. The Senate even passed a motion of thanksgiving to the gods for his victories, and the Roman citizenry held Metellus in the highest esteem. This fame and success increased his desire to thoroughly vanquish Jugurtha, but the fear of spoiling his achievements drove him to become increasingly cautious. After Jugurtha's frequent ambushes, Metellus decided against his ongoing programme of disorganized plunder because it was riskier and left smaller raiding parties vulnerable to Numidian surprise attacks. Instead of operating in numerous bands, he consolidated his army into two large groupings, giving command of the other half to Marius. The two ravaged the countryside in tandem, covered relatively large swathes of territory and were able to better protect their own pillaging parties by accompanying them. This offered greater protection, but it limited the level of damage that they could inflict because their soldiers were centralized in two contingents rather than spread across the Numidian kingdom. By this method, Metellus hoped to mitigate the risks that Jugurtha posed, but he continued to harass the Romans anyway.

Metellus again altered his strategy when it became apparent that Jugurtha's persistent guerrilla tactics were wearing down his legions. Metellus resorted to besieging the Numidian city of Zama in order to lure Jugurtha into a set-piece battle in defence of its inhabitants. However, the crafty Jugurtha had previously learned of his plans and reinforced the city with defenders before Metellus arrived. After Jugurtha finished his preparations, he bade the Zamans farewell but promised to return with a large army to repulse the Romans.

When Metellus arrived and began laying siege to Zama, he ordered Marius to march to the elevated city of Sicca – which has been identified as modern-day El Kef in Tunisia – to commandeer provisions. Massive armies required a colossal supply of food, wine and munitions to be both effective and to prevent discontentment from growing in the ranks. Given that Sicca had defected to Metellus earlier in the campaign and seemed partial to the Romans, Marius' mission seemed relatively harmless, but Jugurtha believed that he could regain Sicca's allegiance. Therefore, he formulated a plan to foil Marius' assignment. When Marius arrived in Sicca, he accordingly foraged for the necessary materials, and the following morning, he prepared to depart. As Marius marched his legionaries towards the

city's gate, Jugurtha sprung his ambush and blocked their exit. In a loud cry, the king encouraged the citizens to attack the Romans from the rear. This could have spelled doom for Marius and his subordinates, because they weren't expecting Jugurtha's arrival and weren't prepared to fight a battle on two fronts. However, Marius' poise prevented the king's plan from fully developing. He rapidly rounded up his troops and swiftly charged Jugurtha's position outside Sicca before the Siccans could organize an attack on his rear. At first, the king's men firmly defended their ground, but Marius' troops were more determined, disciplined and had a distinct numerical advantage. Eventually, Jugurtha's men lost heart and melted away into the wilderness without suffering significant losses.

After the skirmish with Jugurtha, Marius travelled back to Zama to deliver the ample provisions that he had acquired to assist the army's ongoing siege. Upon his arrival, he was able to participate in an attempt to seize Zama. Metellus had concocted a plan to capture the town, and he ordered his lieutenants to take charge of units that were interspersed around the city's walls. When he gave the word, his deputies simultaneously ordered the legionaries to rush towards the town. While slingers laid down covering fire, others attempted to scale the walls with ladders or breach the fortifications by other means. However, the inhabitants repelled them by raining stones, sharpened pikes and fire down upon the vulnerable Romans, who probably suffered considerable casualties.

As the struggle raged, Jugurtha appeared on the horizon at the head of an army and tore into a poorly defended Roman camp at the rear of the Zaman assault. The bivouac's unsuspecting legionaries were thrown into chaos. Some retreated, others fought, but most who remained perished. However, a select group of forty Romans established a defensible position on a hill and valiantly repulsed every enemy attack. Eventually, they even charged headlong towards a larger Numidian detachment, causing them to withdraw, which was one of the camp's only successes in the battle. Regardless of this singular tale of valour, the Numidians ultimately infiltrated the Roman bivouac.

When Metellus learned that his legionaries were fleeing from the camp to escape the melee and rushing towards his position near Zama, he realized that his army was imperilled. Without demur, he ordered the cavalry to come to the camp's aid, but he also sought out his legate's assistance. With tears streaming down his face, he implored

his friend and trusted deputy, Marius, to save the legions and lead an allied force to support the cavalry. Marius dutifully complied with Metellus' entreaties and hurried to defend the camp. When the bivouac's reinforcements arrived, the tide began to turn against the Numidians. Jugurtha's soldiers were hampered by the camp's fortifications and were taking heavy losses. Consequently, the Numidian sounded the retreat. The Romans might have had a reasonable chance to pursue and potentially capture Jugurtha, but on this occasion, nightfall assured his safety.

The following morning, Metellus bolstered the camp's defences to avoid a repeat of the previous day's near disaster, and then he set out to storm Zama again. As the Romans and Zamans exchanged showers of missiles, the legionaries once more perilously attempted to scale the walls. At that moment, Jugurtha reappeared and launched a ferocious assault on a group of exposed legionaries. The Numidian cavalry attacked in an unorthodox fashion by launching directly into the Roman lines, followed by their infantry doing the same. The conflict continued as the Romans struggled to survive the relentless onslaught.

During Jugurtha's counteroffensive, Marius was temporarily placed in command of the siege, but at once, he observed Jugurtha's effective assault. However, he also noticed how keenly the town's inhabitants monitored the battle's Jugurthine front. Therefore, Marius slowed the attack upon the Zaman facade, bluffing discouragement. The walls' defenders, believing that they had successfully repulsed the Roman siege, switched their focus to Jugurtha's aggressive attack. This was Marius' plan all along. When the Zamans diverted their attention elsewhere, he relaunched the assault with vigour. Ladder after ladder was placed against the walls and soldiers rushed up to meet the defenders, but it was for naught. The Zamans successfully prevented them from gaining a viable foothold, and the enterprise ended in failure. While they were unable to take the city by force, the Romans were eventually able to at least survive Jugurtha's offensive. The increased Roman pressure prompted the Numidian king and his troops to withdraw and evaporate into the hinterland.

After he repeatedly failed to capture Zama, Metellus finally acknowledged that it could not be seized by storming its formidable walls. Once again, he also concluded that Jugurtha would only engage him via an ambush or while occupying immensely favourable positions. In the end, Metellus admitted that his strategy was flawed. He abandoned the siege, and he garrisoned and strengthened the

Numidian towns' fortifications that he had previously captured. Then he and most likely Marius made their way to their winter quarters in the Roman province of Africa just outside the Numidian kingdom.

During the autumn and winter, Metellus resumed his initial strategy of treachery. He managed to deliver a message to Jugurtha's chief deputy, Bomilcar, requesting a clandestine meeting between the two, and the Numidian surprisingly agreed to speak with the Roman. During their conference, Metellus guaranteed Bomilcar that if he delivered Jugurtha to him, then the Senate would forgive his improprieties, including Massiva's murder. Bomilcar adeptly deduced that any peace treaty between the Numidians and Romans would inevitably require his surrender to Rome to answer for his crimes, likely resulting in his execution. Metellus' proposal offered him a way to avert a seemingly inescapable death penalty. As a result, Bomilcar gladly accepted Metellus' offer, recognizing that it was his best option.

Even though the Romans had not been able to capture or comprehensively defeat Jugurtha, he began to despair his misfortunes, and Bomilcar unfaithfully used this to his own advantage. He approached the king and implored him to surrender for his loyal subjects' sake. He reminded Jugurtha that he had never defeated Metellus in battle. His subjects were suffering from the effects of the Roman tactics. Numidians soldiers were being captured and dying, and the kingdom's treasury was being exhausted. The only option for the wise king, Bomilcar suggested, was to surrender unconditionally and accept his fate at the hands of the Romans. To conclude his compelling case, Bomilcar likely implied that perhaps Jugurtha could negotiate a comparatively lenient punishment. The king languished over the decision but ultimately agreed with the perfidious Bomilcar.⁹

Consequently, a demoralized Jugurtha dispatched peace envoys to Metellus to inform the general of his intention to concede defeat and receive Rome's terms. Metellus accepted Jugurtha's tentative surrender. According to the stipulations, Jugurtha was to relinquish his war elephants and a host of horses and weapons.¹⁰ He was additionally required to hand over all Roman deserters, hostages to ensure his cooperation and an extraordinary 2,000lb of silver, and the Numidian dutifully obeyed. He was also bound to deliver himself to Metellus to learn his fate. After he had obediently submitted to every Roman demand other than surrendering himself to Metellus, he began to vacillate. He would be exchanging his kingship for submission, slavery or possibly even a humiliating death after being exhibited in

chains during a Roman triumphal procession. After days of reflection, Jugurtha decided against submitting to Metellus, and instead, he resumed the war.¹¹ Likely following his decision to renege on his agreement, Metellus supposedly massacred the hostages and deserters, which seems contrary to his upright character. Nevertheless, hostages in the ancient world were often used to guarantee good behaviour or cement an agreement, but if one of the parties violated the terms, then it was expected that the hostages would be severely mistreated or even killed. Metellus apparently opted for their executions. After their deaths, Jugurtha surely recognized that he must defeat Rome because he could not seriously hope for lenient treatment from the Republic. If he surrendered, then he could expect to receive the hostages' same fate.¹²

Around this time, a grateful Senate reappointed Metellus to the Numidian command, but Marius began to have ambitious designs of his own. He coveted the consulship, and the flames of his desires were fanned by a diviner's prediction. Allegedly, while Marius was respectfully offering his sacrifices to the gods during a visit to Utica, the administrative capital of the Roman province of Africa, chance brought him face-to-face with a psychic. He was told of his glorious future and urged to follow what his mind was yearning. If he did, the seer claimed, then the result would be positive. While this advice was exceedingly cryptic, Marius believed that it validated his consular aspirations.¹³

Roman religion varied wildly from many modern religions. It was polytheistic and without any discernible moral code, other than the requirement to respect the gods. Their religion was also communal in nature, meaning the community collectively needed to perform the necessary rituals to appease the gods and stave off the deities' wrath against their whole society. Each citizen was expected to do their part, but a single person's transgression could invite punishment for the entire community. There were certain actions thought to please the gods, including sacrifices. Participating in them was an important component of Roman religion. They were part of normal religious life and included burning a pinch of incense or a salt cake and sometimes slaughtering animals. When beasts were sacrificed in deference to the gods, the participants consumed the flesh and considered the ritual to be sharing a meal with the deities. Rituals and sacrifices were carried out publicly and privately, and they were performed during annual celebrations and as votive offerings. Interestingly though, it was not

necessary to actually believe in the gods or sincerely make the proper sacrifices to enjoy their favour. Romans believed that they simply needed to conduct the appropriate rituals and outwardly show proper respect to the gods to avert their displeasure.¹⁴

It isn't evident whether Marius' sacrifice was a votive offering or part of a larger festival. Perhaps he was asking for the gods' favour in his endeavours, or he may have just been participating in a scheduled celebration. It appears as though it was a public, or at least semi-public, animal sacrifice, given that a soothsayer approached him. Regardless of the sacrifice's purpose, following the seer's equivocal advice, Marius requested a leave of absence from Metellus so he could campaign for the consulship in Rome, which wasn't an altogether inappropriate petition. Metellus was shocked by the request and recommended that he reconsider. Marius' ancestors certainly weren't particularly remarkable. They weren't among the aristocracy. They had never held a Roman political office before Marius, had no great military victories on which to boast and they weren't patricians. Because of these disadvantages, Metellus advised Marius that certain men ought not desire everything, which were sharp words from a man who was born into great wealth, the aristocracy and had risen to the consulship almost as a hereditary rite of passage.¹⁵ However, Metellus' rationale may have obscured his real motives. The general had good reason to wish to retain a prized and multi-talented deputy through the war's completion, but Metellus may have also secretly and vindictively denied Marius' petition as a kind of revenge against the man who offended his family in 119 BC.¹⁶

Marius was impervious to Metellus' arguments because he was not satisfied with his social or military rank, and he was doggedly determined to persuade Metellus to approve his furlough. Marius' persistence annoyed the general, who began to refuse his requests with even less tact until he eventually infuriated Marius and inspired extreme rancour.¹⁷ Following another petition for a leave of absence to seek the consulship, Metellus quipped, 'You ought to be satisfied if you get to be consul along with my son.'¹⁸ This riposte especially stung Marius considering that Metellus' son was a much younger man than he was at the time. Consequently, Marius began to thoroughly despise Metellus and accused him of improprieties, including purposefully continuing the Jugurthine War without end. Marius also boasted to many that if he were in command of the war, then it would be concluded in a matter of days.

Marius was set on running for the consulship and leading the Jugurthine War, and he began consolidating his adherents and attracting new supporters. This mustn't have been too difficult, given that Rome was becoming increasingly impatient with Metellus' inability to expeditiously end the war. Marius additionally sought his legionaries' support. To achieve that end, he relaxed his high military standards to win the favour of the troops, who were less than thrilled by the strict governance that he had initially instituted.¹⁹ Nevertheless, many of Marius' soldiers already held him in high esteem. He was renowned for his willingness to share the common foot soldiers' discomfort and labours. Instead of sleeping in a dignified tent that was appropriate for his rank, he chose to rest on ordinary bedding like the rest of the army. He also shared meals with his soldiers rather than enjoying exotic and expensive foods associated with his officership. He even helped his subordinates by participating in their drudgery, whether he was building fortifications or laboriously digging entrenchments.²⁰ Marius was also an adroit soldier and wise commander, which the legionaries appreciated, but his conspicuous bravery and propensity towards fair dealing additionally won him plaudits from the troops. All of this meant that the legionaries greatly admired him, but this wasn't his only means of support.²¹

Marius also organized discontentment among his friends, business contacts and perhaps his well-connected subordinates in Africa. He requested that they strongly criticize Metellus to their Roman contacts and demand that the aristocrat be replaced by none other than Marius himself. Marius even managed to enlist the support of an ally with a noble lineage, Gauda. Like Jugurtha, Gauda was fathered by Mastanabal, but he served in a Numidian contingent that was loyal to Rome, even though he suffered from some physical ailments and may have been afflicted with a mental disability. Gauda expressed his intentions to succeed Jugurtha to the Numidian throne, and he asked Metellus to address him as king and provide him with a troop of bodyguards. The general denied his request but meant no offence. Roman rules stipulated that only a man recognized as a king by Rome could enjoy such honours. While the Numidian was fuming with resentment over Metellus' rebuffs, Marius approached him and exhibited the deference normally shown to a monarch. He offered his assistance to rectify Metellus' offences and install him as king if Gauda supported his campaign for the consulship, and Gauda eagerly accepted Marius' proposal. Marius was becoming increasingly difficult

for Metellus to tolerate, but regardless of being a persistent gadfly, Metellus understood Marius' utility. So, he attempted to focus on his assignment of defeating and capturing Jugurtha.²²

In the meantime, Jugurtha had raised a new force and attempted to recover the cities, including Vaga, whose loyalties lay with Metellus. Vaga's citizens observed a holiday, which included indulging large quantities of food and wine, and Jugurtha treacherously persuaded its inhabitants to invite the local Roman garrison's military leaders to feast with them in their homes. The townsfolk obeyed, and as the unsuspecting and likely intoxicated Roman officers celebrated, they were ruthlessly slaughtered. The leaderless foot soldiers were then also massacred. The only survivor was the highest-ranking Roman in Vaga, Titus Turpilius Silanus, who escaped under unknown circumstances.²³ He was a client and close friend of Metellus, and he had served as Vaga's garrison commander.²⁴

Metellus was enraged by Vaga's betrayal and barbarity. He was incensed and driven by revenge to swiftly respond with severity.²⁵ As a consequence, in 108 BC, he led his soldiers to Vaga in a protracted march, but while en route, the troops became discontented due to the journey's laborious nature. However, Metellus averted a possible mutiny and mollified their anger by promising them Vaga's considerable booty. With the assurance of Vaga's spoils, the legionaries resumed their onerous march with great anticipation. When the Romans finally arrived, Vaga's townspeople caught sight of the horde, but because their crops were not being molested by the soldiers, they assumed it was Jugurtha and his troops, not the Romans. They eagerly exited their town to warmly greet their king, but realized their mistake when it was far too late. The Romans butchered them, stormed the city and left it devoid of plunder, gratifying Metellus' legionaries.²⁶

As the soldiers were enjoying the spoils, Vaga's garrison commander, Silanus, was brought before the assembled troops to explain how he was the only person who survived the massacre. His responses were considered wholly unsatisfactory, and many soldiers clamoured for his head.²⁷ Marius was a member of the council that investigated Silanus' charges, and he fanned the legionaries' anger and accused the man of treachery. It appears that Marius sincerely believed that Silanus was guilty of some sort of transgression, and as a result, he influenced Metellus to sentence Silanus to die, even though the commander wasn't inclined to order his execution at first. After

Metellus acquiesced and condemned Silanus, the former garrison commander was promptly bludgeoned to death by Metellus' troops. However, not long after his execution, evidence surfaced that suggested that Silanus may have been innocent of any wrongdoing. Metellus was distraught by the possible wrongful execution and the loss of a cherished friend and client. Some of the general's associates attempted to console him, but not Marius. He was filled with animosity towards Metellus and disdainfully bragged about forcing Metellus' hand, which resulted in the execution of a likely innocent man. From that moment forward, Marius and Metellus were publicly and irreparably at odds with each other.²⁸

Why Marius participated in and even boasted about this episode is somewhat mysterious, but there are some possible explanations. First and foremost, he likely assumed that Silanus was, in fact, guilty, but other motives may have spurred Marius' involvement in the incident. Considering that many of the legionaries viewed Silanus' survival as dishonourable and Marius was actively building a support base among the soldiery, he may have vocally supported Silanus' execution to curry favour with the troops. After Silanus was dead and it seemed that he had been wrongly beaten to death, Marius must have made a habit of spreading reports about how Metellus shamefully condemned an innocent man to denigrate Metellus even further and promote himself. However, even though he had harmed Metellus' reputation and assembled a broad corps of adherents, Marius was still no closer to being permitted to seek the consulship. Therefore, Marius may have bragged about his role in the Silanus affair to infuriate Metellus to the point of releasing him from his post so that he could finally canvass for the consulship.

During the debacle, it became abundantly clear that Marius no longer trusted Metellus to ably prosecute the war, but regardless of his feelings, for the time being, the general simply brushed Marius' insults aside and tried to focus on Jugurtha. Once again, Metellus turned to treachery as a means of neutralizing the monarch, even though his previous attempts had ended in failure. Metellus had already induced the Numidian king's lieutenant, Bomilcar, to work against Jugurtha, and after the plot nearly succeeded, their efforts began anew. Bomilcar had tired of Jugurtha's leadership, and he hoped for Metellus' rewards rather than Rome's punishment. As a result, he began to scheme against the Numidian king again, but on this occasion, he formed a clandestine alliance with a powerful Numidian

named Nabdalsa. The two agreed on a date and time for their coup, but it seems to have been a poorly hatched plan because they failed to settle on the plot's details. Instead, they resolved to simply improvise the specifics on the given day.

As the agreed date for Jugurtha's removal slowly approached, Nabdalsa's fortitude became suspect. He was fearful of the hazardous task and began to reconsider his involvement in the coup, but Bomilcar realized that his co-conspirator's dedication was wavering. So, he drafted a letter to Nabdalsa, censuring him for being cowardly while also bolstering his confidence in the scheme. As it arrived, Nabdalsa read the missive and carelessly set it aside. The letter's contents must have caused Nabdalsa an inordinate amount of anxiety or the ongoing war simply left him fatigued, because he immediately proceeded to take an ill-advised nap. During his slumber, one of his servants discovered the dispatch and became aware of the conspiracy. The concerned Numidian decided that the only proper course of action was to deliver the letter directly to Jugurtha to expose the treasonous scheme.

When Nabdalsa awoke from his nap, he couldn't locate Bomilcar's incriminating message. He was overwhelmed with dread and panic because he realized what his subordinate had done. He was unable to prevent his dependant from delivering the letter, but he did manage to procure an audience with the king to explain the situation. During their conference, he unconvincingly claimed that his servant had done what he had planned to do all along, namely, deliver the damning evidence, exposing the coup to the king. Jugurtha did not believe his preposterous story, but he responded civilly and attempted to contain his rage. However, Bomilcar and many others who were involved in the scheme were promptly rounded up and summarily executed. A large portion of Jugurtha's personal friends and senior officers died during the purge, which left the king denuded of capable advisors.

Jugurtha was notably shaken by the event. He was no longer just afraid of the Romans. He feared his friends and subjects as well. He privately questioned everyone's allegiance, and his faith even dissipated in the once trusted subordinates whom he didn't sentence to die. Paranoia gripped his weary mind, and he began to live an erratic lifestyle to avoid being assassinated. He spent his nights in sundry and seemingly random locations, often not spending two days in a row in the same place. His nights were frequently filled with terror as he was awoken by the slightest disturbances, which

prompted him to frantically reach for his weapons.²⁹

Throughout the Bomilcar saga, Marius continued to incessantly badger Metellus to approve his furlough. Marius' persistence and involvement in the Silanus scandal wore heavily on Metellus, who initially hoped that Marius would abandon his consular aims. Possibly by the summer of 108 BC, Metellus viewed Marius as an incorrigible nuisance and an unnecessary distraction. So, according to Sallust, he finally approved Marius' leave of absence. In all fairness, they both mistreated one another, but Marius' overall actions were especially despicable. His involvement in the Silanus debacle was detestable, and his treatment of Metellus was contemptuous considering that he had generously appointed Marius as a legate and the Caecilius Metellus family had previously aided his campaign for the tribunate.³⁰

Plutarch, on the other hand, presented a slightly different sequence of events. In his version, Marius was given permission to seek the consulship a mere twelve days before the election, which seems like a suspiciously short amount of time to campaign for the state's highest office. When he arrived in Utica to depart for Rome, only then did an augur inform him of his great future. Regardless of the varying renditions, Marius was finally permitted to return to Rome to canvass for the consulship.³¹

VI

NOVUS HOMO

'I cannot, to justify your confidence, display family portraits or the triumphs and consulships of my forefathers; but if occasion requires, I can show spears, a banner, trappings and other military prizes, as well as scars on my breast.'

– Gaius Marius

Long before Metellus even reasonably considered approving Marius' furlough to canvass for the consulship, Marius had already laid the foundation for his election bid. Marius' friendly business and military associates in Africa were conducting an effective letter-writing campaign. They contacted their family, friends and associates in Rome, extolling Marius' achievements and denouncing Metellus' leadership.¹ Eventually, Marius was released from his Jugurthine War post, and when he finally arrived in Rome in 108 BC, he was wildly popular among the commoners and equestrians. He was renowned for his role in the Jugurthine War, even though some of the tales were likely hyperbolic or even fabricated. Metellus' acclaim, however, was waning. Rome was becoming impatient with Metellus' perceived inability to capture Jugurtha, and Marius' scurrilous attacks were effectively undermining Metellus' job security. Very quickly, Metellus' Numidian assignment became increasingly precarious, and as Marius' fame ascended, he appeared to be a viable replacement.²

Upon Marius' arrival in Rome, he was greeted by adoring masses, and a tribune of the people permitted him to speak to an organized assembly where Marius delivered one of many campaign stump speeches. Marius' bid for the consulship was probably not much different than today's elections. He likely made bold promises, promoted his character and experience, disparaged a scapegoat for the current woes and pitted the larger, ostensibly disadvantaged class against the outof-touch aristocratic elite. In Marius' case, this was a recipe for victory.³

When Marius was still in Numidia, he was already claiming that he was a better commander than Metellus and could conclude the war more quickly than him. These boasts continued when he returned to Rome to stand for the consulship, even though winning Rome's top post wasn't necessarily a means to obtaining the Numidian command.

Nonetheless, he frequently reminded the electorate that he was more than capable of quickly vanquishing Jugurtha if he were assigned to the front. He blamed the aristocratic Metellus for the never-ending war in Numidia. He even accused Metellus of purposefully extending the war in order to remain in power and enrich himself even further.⁴ Aside from levelling unsubstantiated charges against Metellus and the aristocracy as a whole, he surely extended pledges to the voters that were difficult, if not impossible, to fulfill, like most politicians do. There is no way to ascertain what campaign promises he contrived, but he must have made a concerted effort to pander to the lowest strata of society because they flocked to his standard.⁵

When elections operated properly and weren't hijacked by illegal electoral bribery, Romans tended to support candidates who were of alleged good character, boasted valuable experience and had an illustrious lineage. Marius' ancestors were not experienced politicians or famed generals. In fact, no man in his family had ever been elected to the consulship, but Marius overcame this obstacle by relying on his purportedly honourable character and distinguished career. He had served under the popular Scipio Aemilianus in Numantia, and he had been a military tribune, possibly a quaestor, tribune of the people, praetor, governor of Further Spain and a legate in the Jugurthine War. Marius' public *curriculum vitae* was highly impressive, and the point that he clearly made when he was canvassing was that he was an honourable self-made man whose experience was both lengthy and successful.

Marius also took advantage of the prevalent societal rifts. By 108 BC, discord among the classes had been an ongoing conundrum, which sometimes resulted in political violence and assassinations. The nobles wished to defend their property and position of power, and more than a few of them preferred to be allowed to exploit the state's influence and wealth for their own purposes. The proletariat desired a larger role in governing Rome and themselves, but a large segment of the impoverished plebeians frequently clamoured to be awarded subsidized grain, complimentary land and even debt cancellation. The aristocrats and commoners both had legitimate complaints and worthwhile causes, but sizeable factions within both groups also angled to selfishly use the state as a means to prosperity at the expense of others. As a consequence, the proletariat and nobility often suspiciously viewed each other with distrust and, at times, hatred.

In 108 BC, Marius decided to tap into this dispute and use it to his

advantage, and he may well have exacerbated the simmering discontentment in the process. During his election bid, he contrasted his alleged upstanding character with that of the aristocracy, whom he claimed had been corrupted by generations of luxuries, overindulgence and unearned honours. He presented himself as a humble man who spoke without eloquence, rose from poverty through hard work and tenacity, and never received the Greek education that influenced the elites. On the other hand, he asserted, the aristocrats were bereft of desirable virtues and relied on their birthright rather than earning the privilege to obtain a public office. Once in power, their goal was not to justly govern the state but to seek personal glory and satisfy their avarice. He professed that they had also turned their backs on Roman values and been sullied by the immoral Greek instructors. His invective surely resonated with the frustrated underclasses, who viewed the aristocrats negatively, but it definitely irked and offended the nobles, many of whom became Marius' bitter foes. The activities during Marius' consular campaign and the remainder of his public service fomented long-lasting opposition from much of Rome's elite, and for good reason. He challenged their influence and the status quo, but he also publicly vilified them. This guaranteed their hostility towards him, but it additionally granted Marius a firmly dedicated constituency, the proletariat.⁶

It is safe to assume that neither Metellus nor his immediate family members sponsored Marius' consular campaign after the numerous slights and conspicuous offences. A member of the Caecilius Metellus family had assisted his election for the tribunate, and in return, Marius threatened to imprison his purported patron or one of his family members. Then Metellus himself had selected Marius to serve as his legate in Numidia, which was a tremendous opportunity. While he was there, he thanked Metellus by spreading disparaging rumours, plotted against him, thanklessly left his military post when the war was still active and sought to remove him from his command. These offences, in addition to his attacks on the nobility, guaranteed the Caecilius Metellus family's opposition. Still, there were likely other former patrons who had helped Marius throughout much of his life, including Herennius, and they may have been willing to contribute to his election by engaging their networks or even backing his campaign financially. While Marius had offended many nobles, it seems probable that he still maintained close relationships with at least a small minority of aristocratic families. The nobility wasn't a unified party, and an untold number of them must have supported his

candidacy for one reason or another. It seems incredibly unlikely that his campaign could have gained much traction without any support from the elites.

After largely offending the aristocracy and losing the Caecilius Metellus clan's support, Marius' campaign must have been viewed as a non-starter by the nobles, but in late 108 BC, when the contested consular election's votes were tallied, Marius was easily elected to the consulship. By exploiting class hostility and relying on the commoners' and equestrians' support, he was able to overcome any barriers and achieve the state's highest post. His consular colleague was Lucius Cassius Longinus, the former praetor who transported Jugurtha to Rome to testify in the bribery trial, and their term began in 107 BC. Since no one in Marius' family had ever risen to the consulship, he became what was known as a *novus homo*, which means 'new man'. This was a proud and rare distinction for a Roman who had become the first in his family's history to reach the Roman political hierarchy's apex without the benefit of relying on an illustrious family name. However, sometimes the phrase *novus homo* is also used to describe the first individual in a given family to gain admittance into the Senate.⁷ Nevertheless, before Marius' successful election, there were only five previous *novus homines* who obtained the consulship in the second century BC.⁸ This was clearly a momentous occasion, but initially, Metellus and the aristocracy probably viewed Marius' candidacy as a joke. He wasn't expected to be able to compete with men whose families boasted multiple consulships and great fortunes, but he did and was victorious. His election-day success surely shocked Metellus and his fellow aristocrats. It was also a blow to the *optimates*, who had to recognize a *populares* consul who publicly bore enmity towards many of their adherents, a feeling that was clearly mutual.

Once inaugurated as consul, Marius' tenure was certainly far from lethargic, and upon entering his office, he immediately set his sights on acquiring his next primary goal, securing the Numidian command for himself. Metellus' generalship had recently been extended by the Senate, which wasn't out of the ordinary, but Marius was undaunted by this recent renewal. He conspired with the tribune Titus Manlius Mancinus to introduce a bill to the assembly to replace Metellus with Marius as the new ranking Jugurthine War general, which was a bold and novel strategy that Marius recycled later in his life. The measure passed with overwhelming support, legally negated the Senate's latest

extension and awarded Marius the coveted post. Marius was again victorious and proved his potency as a statesman, but he created additional domestic enemies in the process. He had defied the Senate, who largely supported Metellus, furthered the divide between himself and the nobles, and once again insulted the Caecilius Metellus family and his one-time benefactor, Metellus.⁹

Once the assembly approved the measure, Marius' mind focused on preparing for the war in Numidia. Part of his strategy for a swift victory over Jugurtha was centred around a troop surge to remedy the Roman efforts' shortcomings and Metellus' failures. The aristocrat had experienced some success in Numidia. He had captured several cities while others voluntarily switched their allegiances to him, and Metellus had defeated Jugurtha in battle. However, the Numidian king's losses were relatively insignificant in the grand scheme of the war. Numidian armies had suffered negligible casualties. Jugurtha still held many strongholds throughout Numidia, and he traversed his kingdom and attacked Metellus at will. No matter what Metellus did, it seemed that Jugurtha was always able to escape unscathed and return with another army. Metellus may have laid a foundation for Marius to build upon, but Metellus really was not any closer to concluding the war than when he began.

Marius determined that a new strategy needed to be implemented to quickly neutralize Numidia and punish Jugurtha. Rome needed to capture the king's Numidian strongholds, seize much of his seemingly inexhaustible wealth and occupy much, if not all, of Numidia. Once this was complete, then Jugurtha would no longer have access to his kingdom or fortunes. Then his surrender or capture would either be imminent or he would be forced to flee to another kingdom in search of aid. Marius likely realized that another country might be more than willing to betray Jugurtha to Rome. Conversely, if any foreign kingdoms decided to invest their armies in Jugurtha's bid to expel Rome from Numidia, then the new Roman force must be potent enough to defeat Jugurtha and his potential allies. The only way, in Marius' mind, to accomplish these goals was to substantially increase the size of the Roman army in Numidia, but a troop surge had other added benefits. If Jugurtha agreed to meet Rome on the battlefield, then the enlarged Roman army might also make it easier for the legions to inflict damaging defeats, unlike Metellus' hollow victories, and perhaps even prevent Jugurtha's escape. Regardless of how Marius vanquished Jugurtha, he was sure that a troop surge was

imperative to his success.¹⁰

Marius was often at odds with the Senate, but when he requested permission to levy additional troops for his upcoming Numidian campaign, they begrudgingly approved his petition. Marius enrolled auxiliaries from allied nations, recruited Roman veterans of prior wars and enlisted the best of the propertied classes throughout Italy. All of these were fairly standard operating procedures in times of conflict, but Marius permitted poor landless plebeians and perhaps even some slaves to volunteer for service, which ran counter to Roman policy. The senatorial elites gleefully observed his recruitment of the underclasses. They assumed that the necessitous plebeians would be offended by his attempts to enroll them into the legions, and consequently, Marius' popularity would diminish. Alternatively, if they did join the war effort, then the aristocrats likely thought that the poverty-stricken proletariat would loathe the discipline and serve poorly, hurting Marius' reputation. Either way, they hoped that opening the legionary ranks to the poorest Romans would dramatically backfire and undermine Marius' stunning political rise. Contrary to their predictions, his ranks swelled with commoners motivated by the prospect of booty, and they capably performed their duties.¹¹

In 107 BC, while Marius was enlisting new legionaries, he delivered a speech to a large gathering of Romans, which reads as much like a fiery campaign oration as it does a recruitment pitch. A reproduction of this address still exists in its entirety, but it was recorded by the ancient author Sallust years after Marius' death. It is possible that Sallust replicated the speech from first-hand accounts, which were still available in his era either in written or oral traditions, but it's just as conceivable that he entirely fabricated the oration. Nonetheless, considering Marius' popularity with the underclasses, his documented political rifts and his life's history, the address seems to be fairly consistent with what is known about Marius. In his speech, Marius responded to the nobles' criticisms of him and continued his diatribe against their class. He extolled his own character and experience, reasserted his guarantee of victory over Jugurtha and called for commoners to volunteer for legionary service.¹²

Marius purportedly opened by exclaiming:

'I know, fellow citizens, that it is by very different methods that most men ask for power at your hands and exercise it after it has been secured; that at first they are industrious, humble and modest, but afterwards they lead

lives of indolence and arrogance. But the right course, in my opinion, is just the opposite; for by as much as the whole commonwealth is of more value than a consulate or a praetorship, so much greater ought to be the care with which it is governed than that which is shown in seeking those offices. Nor am I unaware how great a task I am taking upon myself in accepting this signal favour of yours. To prepare for war and at the same time to spare the treasury; to force into military service those whom one would not wish to offend; to have a care for everything at home and abroad – to do all this amid envy, enmity and intrigue, is a ruder task, fellow citizens, than you might suppose. Furthermore, if others make mistakes, their ancient nobility, the brave deeds of their ancestors, the power of their kindred and relatives, their throng of clients, are all a very present help. My hopes are all vested in myself and must be maintained by my own worth and integrity; for all other supports are weak.

‘This too I understand, fellow citizens, that the eyes of all are turned towards me, that the just and upright favour me because my services are a benefit to our country, while the nobles are looking for a chance to attack me. Wherefore I must strive the more earnestly that you may not be deceived and that they may be disappointed. From childhood to my present time of life I have so lived that I am familiar with every kind of hardship and danger. As to the efforts, fellow citizens, which before your favours were conferred upon me I made without recompense, it is not my intention to relax them now that they have brought me their reward. To make a moderate use of power is difficult for those who from interested motives have pretended to be virtuous; for me, who have spent my entire life in exemplary conduct, habit has made right living a second nature. You have bidden me conduct the war against Jugurtha, a commission which has sorely vexed the nobles. I pray you, ponder well whether it would be better to change your minds and send on this or any similar errand one of that ring of nobles, a man of ancient lineage and many ancestral portraits – but no campaigns; in order, no doubt, that being wholly in ignorance of the duties of such an office, he might hurry and bustle about and select some one of the common people to act as his adviser. In fact, it very often happens that the man whom you have selected as a commander looks about for someone else to command him. I personally know of men, citizens, who after being elected consuls began for the first time to read the history of our forefathers and the military treatises of the Greeks, preposterous creatures! for though in order of time administration follows election, yet in actual practice it comes first.’

But his less than subtle digs aimed at the elite quickly became overt as

he also promoted himself:

‘Compare me now, fellow citizens, a “new man”, with those haughty nobles. What they know from hearsay and reading, I have either seen with my own eyes or done with my own hands. What they have learned from books I have learned by service in the field; Think now for yourself whether words or deeds are worth more. They scorn my humble birth, I their worthlessness; I am taunted with my lot in life, they with their infamies. For my part, I believe that all men have one and the same nature, but that the bravest is the best born; and if the fathers of Albinus and Bestia could now be asked whether they would prefer to have me or those men for their descendants, what do you suppose they would reply, if not that they desired to have the best possible children?’

‘But if they rightly look down on me, let them also look down on their own forefathers, whose nobility began, as did my own, in manly deeds. They begrudge me my office; then let them begrudge my toil, my honesty, even my dangers, since it was through those that I won the office. In fact, these men, spoiled by pride, live as if they scorned your honours, but seek them as if their own lives were honourable. Surely they are deceived when they look forward with equal confidence to things which are worlds apart, the joys of idleness and the rewards of merit. Even when they speak to you or address the Senate, their theme is commonly a eulogy of their ancestors; by recounting the exploits of their forefathers they imagine themselves more glory. The very reverse is true. The more glorious was the life of their ancestors, the more shameful is their own baseness. Assuredly the matter stands thus: the glory of ancestors is, as it were, a light shining upon their posterity, suffering neither their virtues nor their faults to be hidden. Of such glory I acknowledge my poverty, fellow citizens; but – and that is far more glorious – I have done deeds of which I have a right to speak. Now see how unfair those men are; what they demand for themselves because of others’ merit they do not allow me as the result of my own, no doubt because I have no family portraits and because mine is a new nobility. And yet surely to be its creator is better than to have inherited and disgraced it.

‘I am of course well aware that if they should deign to reply to me, their language would be abundantly eloquent and elaborate. But since after the great honour which you have done me they take every opportunity to rend us both with their invectives, I thought it best not to be silent, for fear that someone might interpret my reticence as due to a guilty conscience. In point of fact, I am confident that I can be injured by no speech; for if they tell the truth, they cannot but speak well of me, and falsehood my life and character refutes. But since it is your judgment in giving me your highest

office and a most important commission which they criticize, consider again and yet again whether you ought to regret those acts. I cannot, to justify your confidence, display family portraits or the triumphs and consulships of my forefathers; but if occasion requires, I can show spears, a banner, trappings and other military prizes, as well as scars on my breast. These are my portraits, these my patent of nobility, not left me by inheritance as theirs were, but won by my own innumerable efforts and perils.'

Marius gradually shifted from solely lambasting the nobility and publicizing his own merits to explaining what Roman recruits could expect from him as a military leader:

'My words are not well chosen; I care little for that. Merit shows well enough in itself. It is they who have need of art, to gloss over their shameful acts with specious words. Nor have I studied Grecian letters. I did not greatly care to become acquainted with them, since they had not taught their teachers virtue. But I have learned by far the most important lesson for my country's good – to strike down the foe, to keep watch and ward, to fear nothing save ill repute, to endure heat and cold alike, to sleep on the ground, to bear privation and fatigue at the same time. It is with these lessons that I shall encourage my soldiers; I shall not treat them stingily and myself lavishly, nor win my own glory at the price of their toil. Such leadership is helpful, such leadership is democratic; for to live in luxury oneself but control one's army by punishments is to be a master of slaves, not a commander. It was by conduct like this that your forefathers made themselves and their country famous; but the nobles, relying upon such ancestors though themselves of very different character, despise us who emulate the men of old, and claim from you all honours, not from desert, but as a debt.

'But those most arrogant of men are greatly in error. Their ancestors have left them all that they could – riches, portrait busts, their own illustrious memory; virtue they have not left them, nor could they have done so; that alone is neither bestowed nor received as a gift. They say that I am common and of rude manners, because I cannot give an elegant dinner and because I pay no actor or cook higher wages than I do my overseer. This I gladly admit, fellow citizens; for I learned from my father and other righteous men that elegance is proper to women but toil to men, that all the virtuous ought to have more fame than riches, and that arms and not furniture confer honour.

'Well then, let them continue to do what pleases them and what they hold dear; let them make love and drink; let them pass their old age where

they have spent their youth, in banquets, slaves to their belly and the most shameful parts of their body. Sweat, dust, and all such things let them leave to us, to whom they are sweeter than feasts. But they will not; for when those most shameless of men have disgraced themselves by their crimes, they come to rob the virtuous of their rewards. Thus, most unjustly, their luxury and sloth, the most abominable of faults, in no wise injure those who practise them, but are the ruin of their blameless country.'

Towards the end of his oration, Marius finally made his impassioned pitch to the masses to join his army:

*'Now that I have replied to them to the extent that my character – but not their crimes – demanded I shall say a few words about our country. First of all, be of good cheer as to Numidia, citizens; for you have put away everything which up to this time has protected Jugurtha – avarice, incompetence, and arrogance. Furthermore, there is an army in Africa familiar with the country, but by heaven! more valiant than fortunate; for a great part of it has perished through the greed or rashness of its leaders. Therefore do you, who are of military age, join your efforts with mine and serve your country, and let no one feel fear because of disasters to others or the arrogance of generals. I, Marius, shall be with you on the march and in battle, at once your counsellor and the companion of your dangers, and I shall treat myself and you alike in all respects. And surely with the help of the gods everything is ripe for us – victory, spoils, glory; but even though these were uncertain or remote, yet all good men ought to fly to the aid of their fatherland. Truly, no one ever became immortal through cowardice, and no parent would wish for his children that they might live forever, but rather that their lives might be noble and honoured. I would say more, citizens, if words could make cowards brave. For the resolute I think I have spoken abundantly.'*¹³

It is easy to imagine throngs of commoners flooding the recruitment centres to join Marius' glorious campaign, and thousands likely enlisted into his growing ranks. By the time he finished assembling his army, Marius had enrolled many more legionaries than the Senate had originally approved, but why did Marius recruit slaves and lowly commoners, which was a violation of Roman policy? There are a few possibilities. As Rome grew, it faced multiple threats, which stretched the Republic's available manpower. To the north, barbarian tribes were creeping towards Roman territory and had humiliated Republican armies, and to the south, Rome still had not vanquished Jugurtha. Furthermore, Rome had to increase other overseas operations as it absorbed new lands and defended these regions from

the ever-present belligerent tribes. Beyond this, Marius had promised to conclude the Jugurthine War within a matter of days, and considering that time was of the essence, admitting the poorest Romans into the legions allowed him to quickly enlist troops to augment the African army.¹⁴

Many believe that Marius opened up enrollment to the lower classes out of necessity because there simply weren't enough able men from the propertied classes to join the army and because he needed to raise a force expeditiously. However, it could have been a combination of factors, including being a political calculation used to ingratiate himself with the proletariat that brought him to power. Because of him, they were able to serve in the legions, just like the wealthier landed classes. Plus, they would be paid by the state and have the opportunity to enjoy the spoils of war. In essence, it was a social promotion, a temporary paid occupation, and the chance at great riches, which provided Marius with an enormous and devoted base of support. Whatever his real motivation, Marius succeeded in quickly raising a large army and winning the support of the poor.¹⁵

During the same election cycle, Lucius Cornelius Sulla entered the political scene and was elected quaestor. He was a charming and bright man known for easily seducing women, and sometimes men. He had piercing greyish blue eyes and blonde hair, but his face was marked with numerous red blotches. In fact, one of his enemies once likened his appearance to a mulberry sprinkled with meal, which Sulla surely found offensive. Sulla descended from an ancient patrician family whose significance and wealth had substantially waned. He was a heavy drinker, and as a young man, he lived in a humble Roman apartment and milled about with disreputable theatrical folk. He was humiliated by his lowly financial situation, but his luck eventually changed. His stepmother and mistress both died and bequeathed him enough wealth to permit him to climb the *cursus honorum* and join the military, but even with this new-found fortune, he remained loyal to his underprivileged and boisterous friends.¹⁶

After his election to the quaestorship, he was selected to serve as one of Marius' lieutenants in Numidia, which was Sulla's first military experience. Yet, he and Marius were vastly different people. Marius was a plebeian *populares* who claimed hardships into his adulthood and declared that he had never learned Greek letters. Sulla, on the other hand, was a patrician who supported the *optimates* and was fluent in Greek, which probably meant that he received a heavily

Greek-influenced education. Marius also asserted that he personally raised himself out of poverty, but Sulla, on the other hand, certainly wasn't a self-made man. He lived in obscurity until he inherited a significant fortune. The two men seemed to be polar opposites. Nevertheless, Sulla was charged with recruiting a cavalry contingent in Italy, transporting it to Africa and leading it during the coming campaign. Little did Marius or Sulla know at the time that they would play pivotal roles in each other's lives and shake Rome's foundations. However, that came later. First, they had to confront Jugurtha.¹⁷

Most likely later in 107 BC, Marius finally set sail for Africa to assume control over the legions, train his newly levied army and implement his battle plan against Jugurtha. Sulla, however, remained in Rome to finish assembling his cavalry unit and was ordered to join Marius in Africa once the preparations were complete. Jugurtha soon faced new commanders, a much larger army than before and an altered strategy, which created additional challenges for the Numidian king, whose situation was already precarious.¹⁸

VII

CONSUL

‘Wherever the eye could reach, the ground was soaked in blood and strewn with weapons, arms, and corpses.’

— *Gaius Sallustius Crispus*

While Marius travelled to Rome in 108 BC, campaigned for the consulship and levied fresh forces, Numidia was still an active war zone. Marius may have lost complete confidence in Metellus, but the nobleman was still determined to conclude the war anyway. After Metellus’ latest failed attempt at treachery, Jugurtha became more cautious than ever, but he was still unvanquished and commanded a potent force. Metellus, however, believed that victory was still possible, and he proved that he wasn’t quite as timid and incompetent as Marius publicly claimed. With Marius still in Rome, Metellus continued military action against the Numidian and ordered his agents and scouts to locate Jugurtha’s horde so that he could spring a sneak attack on the king. Once Metellus had acquired the proper intelligence and prepared his army, the general discreetly caught up with the unsuspecting Jugurtha, surprised his troops – who were not anticipating his arrival – and forced a battle, likely somewhere in the north-western portion of modern-day Tunisia. As the armies faced one another across the battlefield, Metellus sounded the order to charge and his legionaries advanced in disciplined unison, likely launching a volley of javelins and each drawing their gladius, the Roman short sword. The Numidians performed feebly and offered practically no resistance as they fled the field during the Romans’ initial charge. While the king’s men were embarrassingly routed again, most of his soldiers managed to survive and avoid being captured by the Romans. Nonetheless, Jugurtha was dejected by yet another stinging defeat. He managed to escape with his cavalry and a small contingent of soldiers. They travelled through a barren African desert and took sanctuary in the town of Thala, which is in the north-western region of today’s Tunisia.¹

Metellus learned that Thala housed the king, his children and much of his vast treasure, adding additional motivation to capture the town, but it was well protected. Thala was secured by 50 miles of waterless wasteland, which Jugurtha assumed would assure his safety. However,

Metellus was not so easily deterred. He was determined to capture the king and finally finish the prolonged war, even if his troops were required to brave Africa's badlands. In preparation for their trek through the unforgiving desert, Metellus commandeered a host of pack animals, saddled them with numerous sacks of water and abandoned all but ten days' worth of necessities. He also established supply points throughout the desert, where locals were expected to produce water for the legions along their march. Once Metellus was satisfied with his preparations, his army set out for Thala, and Metellus presumably led the advance as thousands of his legionaries trudged along in the scorching waterless wasteland. His men surely resented the expedition after choking on the desert's dust and enduring blistering sun burns, but as their arduous journey was underway, a massive storm unleashed a torrent of rain, greatly benefitting his troops, who believed that it proved that they had the gods' favour. Marius may have been incessantly castigating Metellus in Rome, but the gods in Numidia appeared to smile upon the aristocrat.

In stunning time, Metellus arrived at Thala, where the king had been lingering. Jugurtha was in a state of disbelief because of Metellus' resolve, remarkable leadership and logistical planning. However, Metellus did not conclude the war at Thala as he had hoped. Jugurtha hastily deserted the town and slipped away with his family and much of his remaining wealth. It isn't apparent whether Metellus knew that Jugurtha had absconded or not, but Metellus determined that Thala should pay dearly for harbouring and supporting the king anyway. Consequently, he planned to sack the town, but it was well fortified and defended. For forty days, he besieged the settlement. His troops battered its walls with rams. Others scrambled to force their way into Thala by other means, and some constructed great mounds on which soldiers provided covering fire to protect any exposed legionaries. Little by little, it appeared that Metellus would inevitably capture the town. When the Thalans finally accepted their grim fate, they destroyed their remaining gold, feasted and imbibed wine and burned themselves to death along with much of the town. When Metellus finally gained admission into Thala, it was merely a ghost town. As the Romans toured its ruins and rummaged for plunder, it was eerily silent, with only the remaining fire's embers periodically crackling. Metellus had achieved domination over Thala but not how he had anticipated.

Jugurtha was reeling from repeated defeats, treachery among his lieutenants and the loss of Thala. His position seemed increasingly unsustainable, but he was not prepared to surrender. He resorted to raising yet another army, but from an untapped source. As he fled from Thala, he and his faithful core supporters journeyed through the extensive African deserts to reach the Gaetulians. They were a North African Berber people whose realm bordered the Saharan Desert. Somehow, Jugurtha induced them to join his cause. Besides employing his charisma, he likely offered the Gaetulians immense wealth and possibly promised them vast tracts of land if they helped him defeat the Romans. He must have also warned them that if the Numidian kingdom was conquered, then the Gaetulians would be the next domino to fall in the Roman juggernaut's wake. Regardless of how he accomplished the task, Jugurtha recruited a large Gaetolian army and trained them in the art of warfare.

Jugurtha fully understood how formidable the Romans were, and he knew that the Gaetulians were not enough to ensure his victory. He desperately needed additional help. So, the Numidian resorted to wooing King Bocchus of Mauretania into joining his effort. Mauretania was a westerly North African Berber kingdom that bordered the Mediterranean, and it comprised much of modern-day Morocco. Since its king maintained loose ties to Jugurtha, the Numidian thought that he would be able to cajole him into supporting his endeavour. King Bocchus had married one of Jugurtha's daughters, and while this established an indelible link between the two, it didn't necessarily create a binding alliance. North African leaders usually had many wives, and marriage arrangements didn't necessarily assure friendly partnerships among leaders in the region.

Jugurtha and Bocchus continued negotiating over a potential alliance, and they eventually decided to confer in person. The two kings and their respective armies met at an agreed but undisclosed location to discuss solidifying their pact, which by this point must have already been a foregone conclusion. Nonetheless, Jugurtha presented a compelling case for Bocchus to join him in his struggle. Jugurtha claimed that the Roman Republic was inherently hostile towards monarchies like his, and they were a greedy people bent on controlling every kingdom that they came across. The Numidian explained that before he was attacked by Rome, the Romans destroyed Carthage. Perhaps Mauretania would be Rome's next monarchical casualty after Jugurtha was conquered. Jugurtha's impassioned speech

persuaded Bocchus to side with the Numidian, and the two kings formed a military alliance. However, Bocchus must have visibly lacked enthusiasm or simply had a history of indecision because Jugurtha worried about the king's loyalty and resolve, but for the time being, the Numidian had an ally.

Together, Jugurtha and Bocchus led their armies to the town of Cirta, the nominal Numidian capital, which by this time was under the Romans' control. It was an appealing target for Jugurtha because after Metellus had seized it, he stowed his provisions, prisoners of war and plunder there. Its capture would be a coup for Jugurtha, and it would be a notable setback for the Romans as well as a blow to their confidence. However, Metellus' scouts and spies informed him of the two kings' alliance and their march towards Cirta. Therefore, he rushed to prepare Cirta's defence. When he arrived, he encamped near the capital and monitored the two monarchs. He wisely preferred to observe the Mauretanians and their tactics before engaging the alien enemy, but he never ordered an attack because he learned of Marius' successful political exploits in Rome.

While studiously examining the Mauretanians, Metellus received an unwelcome dispatch, informing him that the recently inaugurated consul, Marius, had been awarded the Numidian command. Metellus thought Marius' candidacy was highly unlikely, but he probably never believed that his own command would be revoked by the Roman people and given to his family's ungrateful former dependant. Nevertheless, the deed was done, which left Metellus despondent and inconsolable. He erupted into tears and likely a tirade of Latin obscenities, probably directed at Marius and perhaps the Roman voters. Metellus must have pondered how Rome and Marius could have so despicably betrayed him. Metellus had laid waste to large segments of Numidia, defeated Jugurtha in every engagement, captured many cities and nearly secured Jugurtha's surrender through treachery. His only demerit was that he had not yet apprehended the Numidian king. He believed, rather incorrectly, that the war was nearly over, but Marius had stolen his victory away from him.

While Marius was en route to assume control over the legions, Metellus decided against unnecessarily provoking a battle with Bocchus and Jugurtha. If he were to defeat the two kings, then Marius' upcoming Numidian labours would be that much easier, and Marius would likely receive all of the glory. However, if the enemy bested Metellus, then he would pay the price politically and his reputation

would forever be marred. He determined that the best course was to delay action until the command was officially transferred to Marius. Therefore, Metellus opened diplomatic channels with King Bocchus, and his message to the monarch was that before waging war against the Republic, he should carefully consider his country's best interests as well as his own. Why provoke a war with Rome when he could have Rome's friendship? The king responded that peace was his desired goal, but he sympathized with Jugurtha's lamentable situation. Metellus and Bocchus continued to converse without reaching a resolution, which consumed considerable time as inaction temporarily turned the war cold.²

Possibly by the summer of 107 BC, Marius and his newly raised legions finally arrived in Utica, and it was there that he expected to assume control over the campaign. Transfer of command was usually conducted between the outgoing general and his newly appointed replacement, but Marius received it from Metellus' deputy, Publius Rutilius Rufus. Metellus flatly refused to greet Marius or give him any satisfaction by personally transferring his imperium to him. He was also uncertain as to whether he could maintain his composure if he did meet with his former subordinate. A violent outburst from Metellus at this point would have been a breach of decorum and harmful to his reputation. Nevertheless, Marius was finally the undisputed supreme commander of the Jugurthine War.³

Humiliated, Metellus returned to Rome in 107 BC, but to his surprise, he was received with great fanfare. Marius had fomented an antiMetellan environment, but the discontentment had subsided to a large extent. His popularity among Romans had understandably returned. Even though he had failed to conclude the conflict, he had admirably prosecuted the Jugurthine War, won at least two sizeable battles and ravaged Numidia. After years of corruption and mismanagement, he returned dignity and honour to the legions. For his toils, he was even rewarded with the triumphant *cognomen* of Numidicus for his commendable service in Numidia. He became officially known as Quintus Caecilius Metellus Numidicus.⁴ At least one source even claims that Metellus was awarded a triumph, a celebratory procession that commemorated a great military victory.⁵ However, if he enjoyed a triumph, then it must have been a relatively minor affair or it may have occurred years later, because there were stringent restrictions governing triumphs. They weren't permitted unless the war zone was at peace and many of the general's soldiers

were able to march through Rome with their commander. Considering that the Jugurthine War was still active and Metellus' troops remained in Africa, it seems implausible that he enjoyed a grand triumph over the succeeding few years, if it ever happened at all.⁶

Upon Marius' anticipated arrival in Africa, Jugurtha and Bocchus both retreated from Cirta to more defensible positions in order to reassess the new situation or possibly lure Marius into an ill-advised conflict. The kings, however, were in no immediate danger because Marius had no desire to provoke a battle at this point of his tenure. His army was an amalgamation of green recruits, seasoned veterans, the poor and the wealthier landed classes. Instead of impetuously charging toward the enemy's massive armies, he decided that it was more prudent to win the legions' loyalty and allow them the opportunity to gain valuable military experience without any real danger.

Marius promptly marched his legions to a lightly defended but affluent region of Numidia. His partially inexperienced army encountered numerous skirmishes but no real large-scale battles. Initially, some of Marius' newly recruited soldiers performed poorly, but Marius opted against meting out draconian punishments to deserving legionaries. Instead, he shamed cowardly and contemptible troops while praising and rewarding exemplary soldiers to increase his popularity and motivate the soldiery to better themselves. While seizing minor Numidian towns and fortresses and encountering Jugurtha's raiding parties, Marius' men gained invaluable combat experience and slowly became disciplined in the process. Marius also permitted them to ravage and plunder the countryside, which the poorest legionaries surely appreciated, and it certainly cemented their allegiance to him. It may have additionally served to gain the devotion of some of Metellus' veterans, who may have felt uneasy about the recent transfer of command. Within a short period of time, the legions were undoubtedly formidable and loyal to Marius.⁷

Marius' grand strategy may not have seemed much different than Metellus', other than the troop surge, but it was certainly more expansive. He and Metellus both realized that no matter how many times Jugurtha was defeated, he would inevitably levy a new army and return. The only way to successfully end the Jugurthine War was to capture or kill Jugurtha. To accomplish this goal, Marius planned on either expelling the king from Numidia or goading him into participating in a risky set-piece battle. To achieve this goal, Marius

intended on capturing the Numidian king's towns and expanding Roman control over most, if not the whole, of Numidia.⁸ However, despite many cities falling to Marius through various means, Jugurtha judiciously refused to engage. With the Numidian unwilling to confront him, Marius continued his programme and set his sights on more ambitious goals.

Marius sought to capture the highly fortified and naturally defensible city of Capsa, whose inhabitants were Jugurtha's ardent supporters. Capsa was a large settlement that was secured by a vast desert, imposing walls and armed defenders, and according to the locals, it was founded by the legendary Hercules. Today, Capsa is called Gafsa and is located in Tunisia. For Marius, there was some advantage to sacking Capsa. Its loss would be a blow to Jugurtha and a warning to other Numidian cities that no one was safe from Marius, and it could possibly lure Jugurtha into an ill-considered pitched battle. The consul had sensible reasons for attempting to capture Capsa, but he was also motivated by his desire for personal glory and to eclipse Metellus' achievements. Metellus had captured Thala, which was a remarkable feat that gave him great acclaim. Marius thought capturing Capsa would be an even more impressive accomplishment and would ostensibly prove his unrivalled greatness as a military leader.⁹

Towards the end of the summer of 107 BC, Marius marched his men towards Capsa without making it obvious where they were heading because he wished to obtain the element of surprise. Marius instructed his legionaries to transport a host of livestock and water vessels. When they arrived at the last river before the desert protecting Capsa began, he ordered his men to eat a hearty dinner and pack the animals and themselves with ample water. Leaving behind all but necessities, they embarked on a night march, and he did the same the next two nights. Before sunrise following the third such march, they came within 2 miles of Capsa. With stealth, they quietly laid in wait for Capsa's citizens to carelessly throw open the city's gates in the morning so that the townsfolk could carry out their daily business, as was the norm.¹⁰

Once the gates were opened, Marius' sleep-deprived quick strike force launched their assault, rushed headlong towards Capsa and stormed the entrance. The inhabitants were unprepared, unable to defend their city and quickly surrendered to Marius, but he was in no mood for clemency. He torched the city and executed the adult

population. He sold the rest into slavery and shared the profits among the soldiery. Ancients attempted to excuse Marius' actions at Capsa because the locals were 'untrustworthy' and the walled city was a great asset to Jugurtha. It's true that modern and ancient warfare's moral codes differ greatly, and summary executions and massacres occurred more frequently in antiquity than in modern times. However, this doesn't excuse his actions. Murdering innocent non-combatants is categorically wrong in the moral sense and always has been. Even Sallust described Marius' actions as a 'violation of the laws of war'. Marius could have easily garrisoned the city after he confiscated the citizens' arms and punished only the combatants, but instead, he chose unrestrained cruelty.¹¹

Capsa's destruction provided Marius with several benefits. Like the acclaim that Metellus won after sacking Thala, Marius was also held in high regard after Capsa's fall. He became massively popular among the soldiery because he allowed them to plunder the city's booty, which was always a boon for the legionaries. Furthermore, Jugurtha was deprived of a highly defensible city and the Numidians' fear of Marius swelled. Some even believed that he was more than a mortal, a kind of demigod. After Capsa, town after town fell to Marius, but they predominantly required no military action. Some stubbornly held out in vain against Marius, only to be sacked, while others willfully surrendered to avoid his renowned wrath. However, the Numidians dreaded Marius so much that most of the towns in his path were simply abandoned. What treasure remained in them was likely picked clean before he burned a large number of them to the ground. The Numidians' despair was ubiquitous, and Marius and his troop surge were chiefly responsible.¹²

By the beginning of 106 BC, Marius' consulship expired, but his Numidian command was extended. Likely around this time, Marius reached the western end of Numidia. He carved a path of terror and destruction through Numidia's heartland, and he may have subdued most of Jugurtha's kingdom in the process. After his protracted march, Marius finally arrived at his destination, which was the city where Jugurtha stored much of his remaining wealth, but unfortunately its name is unknown. It lay near a river called Muluccha, and it was apparently close to the border of Numidia and Mauretania, presumably within Numidia's borders. Steep rock faces naturally protected the settlement, and it could only be reached by a narrow uphill path. It had a spring and more than enough grain to withstand

an extended siege. Apart from the city's natural defences, formidable walls and an armed populace also secured it, making its capture daunting.¹³

Marius was determined to capture the city and its booty, but because of the unforgiving landscape and the difficult approach, he was unable to employ the necessary siege engines. He had to rely solely on foot soldiers and small mobile equipment. Nonetheless, he was undeterred and ordered his legionaries to seize the stronghold. His men boldly sallied towards the city and meandered up the steep, narrow path leading to it, but they were vulnerable. The approach was far too cramped for Marius' soldiers to capitalize on their vast numbers, and because of the landscape, they were unable to secure their footing. Under these unfavourable conditions, they struggled to near the fortress, and the Numidians were patiently waiting for their arrival. Once the Romans were within range, the citizens unleashed a fury of missiles at the exposed legionaries, who courageously strived to resist the onslaught, but it was futile. After observing the continuing carnage, Marius or one of his deputies finally sounded the retreat. Marius' first attempt resulted in total failure, but he was still determined to sack the city. However, after several days and an untold number of failed attempts to breach the defences, Marius was stumped and even considered withdrawing from the enterprise.

By chance, a Ligurian foot soldier from one of Rome's auxiliary units had gone in search of water at the base of the elevated city's rear. As he wandered about, he noticed a few snails. Apparently, he was in the mood for escargot and searched for more snails on the nearby trees and plant life to satisfy his hunger. He was already accustomed to climbing, and as such, he wasn't overly encumbered when he scaled an old oak tree's limbs that snaked through the elevated rocks below the city. As he sought out his dinner and mounted the branches and rocks, the Ligurian eventually noticed that he had inadvertently discovered a way to breach the city. The oak tree had grown tall and mingled with the precipice's rocky face in a manner that provided a means for skilled climbers to reach the plateau and enter the fortified settlement. He carefully reconnoitered the route so that he would be able to relay his findings to Marius and, if necessary, serve as a guide for a small invasion force.

The excited Ligurian quickly returned to the Roman camp and reported what he had discovered to Marius. After the general's personnel verified the route's feasibility, Marius assigned five athletic

horn players and four centurions to accompany the Ligurian to ascend the steep crag the following day. Sometime after daybreak, as Marius' men delicately scaled the precipice, the general occupied the defenders' focus by feigning battle. When the Ligurian and his associates reached the mountain's plateau, they found the city's rear entirely unguarded because Marius had diverted the inhabitants' attention. So, they easily crept into the city. When the general learned of the Ligurian's entrance into the town, presumably via a signal, he launched a ferocious offensive. He unleashed a barrage of artillery and ordered a group of soldiers to form the famed *testudo* (tortoise shell) and march towards the walls. The *testudo* was a formation in which a company of troops linked their shields over their heads, creating a shell to protect themselves from bombardment from above. These Romans then advanced on the city and tried to scale its walls once more. The defenders were not expecting such a tactic after thoroughly repulsing the Romans' previous efforts, and they peppered the legionaries with insults, taunts and of course missiles and probably firebrands. However, they were utterly surprised when, at the given time, the Ligurian and his comrades loudly blew their horns in the back of the city. The town's defenders must have assumed that a large Roman force had already entered and seized a portion of the fortified settlement. Confusion and panic ensued within the city, and the Romans took advantage of the bewilderment, storming the walls and sacking the settlement. There is no mention of the city or the locals' fates, but Marius probably wasn't in a forgiving mood. Regardless of the punishments that he may have doled out, the victory brought Marius an enormous cache of Jugurtha's treasure, further enhanced his reputation and struck fear in the hearts of the Numidians.

As the walled city was being stormed, Sulla finally arrived from assembling an impressive cavalry contingent in Italy, which undoubtedly pleased Marius. The general's army was finally complete, and the increased cavalymen undoubtedly complemented his legions. Unbeknownst to Marius, the addition of Sulla to his ranks was invaluable. He may have had no military or diplomatic experience, but he quickly proved himself to be an adept commander and adroit negotiator.

Following this episode, Jugurtha was under increasing pressure from Marius' assaults as he lost loyal cities, fortified towns, entire regions and much of his wealth. He decided action was unfortunately his only option, but he needed the assistance of his newest ally, King

Bocchus, to improve his chances of defeating Marius. He implored the king to attack without delay, but his dedication to Jugurtha's cause was suspect. He seemed to vacillate between his options of aiding the Romans, siding with Jugurtha or taking a neutral position. To persuade the Mauretanian to reaffirm their alliance, Jugurtha bribed many of Bocchus' courtiers to strenuously advocate his case, and Jugurtha even promised Bocchus one third of his kingdom once Rome was defeated. The combination of the payments and promises induced the king to reaffirm his allegiance to Jugurtha, and they again joined their armies to challenge Rome.¹⁴

After Marius victoriously sacked the fortified city near the river Muluccha, he began the long trek back to Cirta, which was probably his winter quarters, but as he advanced, Jugurtha and Bocchus set out to confront him late in the day. Attacking in the evening was one of Jugurtha's preferred tactics, because if his army was defeated, then it would be saved by nightfall, but if he was victorious, then its familiarity with the countryside would permit it to continue the assault.¹⁵ However, Marius was not taken completely unawares by the pair's aims. His scouts alerted him to the quickly approaching enemy horde, which allegedly numbered 60,000 soldiers, but he didn't have the necessary time to form proper ranks, plan and implement a thorough strategy or even shout orders because of the swift mode of attack. Simultaneously, the Gaetulian and Mauretanian cavalry crashed into the vulnerable Roman lines as the legionaries were also harassed by missile fire.¹⁶ The allied enemy attacked without organization or a clear strategy, but their offensive was initially successful. Very quickly, the Romans faced tens of thousands of North Africans from multiple approaches, and they continuously pelted the legionaries with projectiles. The Romans temporarily staved off widespread panic and ominous dread only because of their thorough discipline and leaders' poise, but they needed a viable battle plan and quickly. The Romans were surrounded, pinned down and unprepared to meet an enemy force much larger than their own. Their future appeared quite bleak.

Marius and his deputies hastily instituted order in the rank and file, which was desperately needed. They formed their units into a ring-shaped formation to protect themselves from the enemy that had encircled them. Marius barked and motioned his orders, leading his personal cavalry unit to defend each section that was facing the gravest danger. He even aided in hazardous charges. He fought

bravely and exuded calm confidence throughout the battle, but Jugurtha's onslaught was relentless. As night grew near, the Romans were still under severe duress, but Marius carefully extricated his legions from the battlefield and took refuge on a nearby, albeit waterless, ridge. A smaller adjacent hill offered access to water, and Marius ordered Sulla and his recently raised cavalry unit to seize it and secure the water source. With sunset approaching and Marius occupying the high ground, Bocchus and Jugurtha halted fighting for the night.

The Numidians, Mauretanians and Gaetulians occupied the territory surrounding the Romans without any discernible order, but nonetheless, they felt confident that they were capable of finishing off Marius. For the first time in years, Jugurtha's soldiers had not been quickly routed by the Romans, and they actually appeared to have won a battle against Marius. Jugurtha's allied forces were ecstatic. Following the engagement, they celebrated well into the night. They spent the twilight hours loudly sharing stories of valour and likely drinking heavily. However, the nearby Romans were within view and earshot of the spectacles and sounds, which motivated the legionaries to overcome their humiliation.

As the morning approached, Jugurtha's and Bocchus' exhausted and probably still drunk forces eventually retired for the remaining night, but Marius used their lack of discipline and unpreparedness to his advantage. Under cover of the early morning darkness, he marched his men in silence to the enemy camps. When they arrived, the Roman horn-blowers simultaneously sounded their instruments and the legionaries belched out horrifying shouts. The terrible clamour awoke the exhausted, confused and perhaps still inebriated enemy, but they were unable to create an adequate defence of their camps. They were swarmed by the Romans, who swept through the bivouacs and slew the nearly defenceless Africans. A mere few hours before, the Numidian king had briefly tasted victory, but by the early morning's light, he was thoroughly defeated. More of Jugurtha's men were slain in this battle alone than in all of the prior engagements combined, but Jugurtha, Bocchus and probably a sizeable portion of their armies still managed to escape the carnage.¹⁷

Unfortunately, it seems that another version of this battle was recorded, but the two adaptations' final events are irreconcilable. In the other rendition, when Marius began his march towards Cirta, Jugurtha mobilized his allied forces, which allegedly numbered

60,000, and again, the Africans surrounded Marius. However, the Romans remained pinned down due to the constant missile barrage. The Romans huddled closely to one another and slowly moved to a more defensible position, but they were under constant attack from Jugurtha's longrange weapons. The legionaries' fate appeared grim, but after three days of being surrounded and constantly assaulted, the Romans prepared for one last sally. As Marius marched his soldiers out to engage the enemy, he was once again quickly surrounded and attacked. With great vigour, the Jugurthine coalition pressed the Romans, who began to lose hope in the face of the seemingly insurmountable enemy. When the legionaries were nearly overrun, an African storm miraculously appeared over the battlefield. Torrents of rain poured down onto the parched Romans, who found new energy once they were rehydrated. The downpour, however, had a negative effect on their enemy, whose weapons became inaccurate once they were dampened. Their animal skin shields absorbed the water and became unwieldy, and the mud impeded their manoeuvrability. Very quickly, the nearly defeated Romans regained the upper hand as Jugurtha's men fled the field.¹⁸

Regardless of how Marius actually defeated the Jugurthine coalition, he learned a valuable lesson. As long as the crafty Jugurtha remained on the loose, his legions should always march in a defensive formation to protect themselves from the king's surprise assaults. As Marius resumed his march to Cirta, he formed his army into a square pattern to protect all of the formation's sides from attack, and it worked without overwhelmingly impeding travel time. He positioned his officers throughout the marching square to ensure that discipline was maintained and orders could quickly be relayed to the foot soldiers. Sulla must have especially impressed Marius, because he was given command of the entire right flank, which was a prestigious appointment. He capably fulfilled his duty.

As Marius and his defensive formation neared Cirta, scouts alerted him that four of Jugurtha's detachments were approaching from different directions. Marius was unsure how to respond to Jugurtha's latest unconventional move. Therefore, he hesitated and attempted to decipher Jugurtha's perplexing strategy. He resolved to stay put, prepare his men for battle, allow Jugurtha's plan to develop and permit the king to come to him. This was contrary to Jugurtha's plan. His intention was to coax Marius into reordering his ranks in the hope that their rear or flanks would be exposed to the enemy, who could

then rout Marius' army.

The legionaries braced themselves in anticipation of the enemy horde's arrival, and as Jugurtha's men converged on the Roman formation, Marius' troops struggled mightily to hold their ground. Sulla's men were the first to engage the enemy, and he ably led his soldiers against the powerful offensive, but Bocchus and his son Volux soon appeared unexpectedly and attacked the Roman rear. Marius' troops were in a fierce fight for survival as they were assaulted from all angles. With their swords drawn and shields held firm, the legionaries strained to maintain their order.¹⁹

Jugurtha was highly encouraged by the Mauretanians' appearance.²⁰ Between the two kings, they had marshalled an army of roughly 90,000 soldiers, which greatly outnumbered the Romans. It appeared that the North Africans were prepared for one last gamble as they risked their massive forces in a final attempt to vanquish Marius' legions.²¹ Jugurtha then confidently rode towards the front lines nearest to Bocchus' men and within range of the Romans. He exclaimed that he had personally killed Marius, and he exposed his sword dripping with warm blood as proof. This was a bluff that he hoped would encourage his allies and discourage the Romans, but Marius was alive and well. In fact, at the time, he was busy managing operations at the far end of the battlefield, but neither the Romans nor the Africans realized this, aside from Jugurtha. The Numidians, Mauretanians and Gaetulians were heartened by the erroneous news, while the Romans sank into despair and began to falter in battle.²²

The dispirited and exhausted Romans who heard the Numidian king's boasts began to give way to the Jugurthine coalition's advances, but hope wasn't entirely lost. Without a moment to spare, Sulla concluded his engagement in an adjacent section of the battlefield, and he road post-haste to engage Bocchus' men who were weakening the rear Roman lines. Bocchus quickly retreated in the face of Sulla's effective counter-attack, but Jugurtha still urged his men forward. His troops continued to press the Romans, but upon learning of his army's peril, Marius sent a Jugurthine cavalry contingent to flight and rushed to defend his imperilled units. With Marius and Sulla focusing their efforts on the weakest front, the battle's tide began to shift. The Romans gained the advantage and started to methodically massacre the North Africans. With a large portion of his army either dead or fleeing, Jugurtha and his remaining soldiers became surrounded and all were killed, save the evasive Jugurtha, who miraculously managed

to escape. The Romans had once again defeated Jugurtha's coalition, and the result was an unmitigated slaughter.²³ Nearly 90,000 of Jugurtha's allies perished, which surely generated a horrific scene.²⁴ According to Sallust, 'wherever the eye could reach, the ground was soaked in blood and strewn with weapons, arms, and corpses'.²⁵

Sulla had once again served valiantly and admirably, and he even became known as one the best soldiers in Marius' legions. His fruitful labours did not go unnoticed by his superior. Marius genuinely treasured his assistance and held him in high esteem. In fact, it appears that the whole Roman soldiery adored Sulla for his affable character, willingness to share their hardships and eagerness to aid others. Yet his motives weren't entirely altruistic. The primary goal of his generosity was to fuel his future political ambitions, but for the time being, his actions were productive for the war effort.²⁶

After an incredibly successful campaign season, Marius finally reached Cirta, where he and his men enjoyed a well-deserved respite. However, after suffering a slaughter of colossal proportions, Bocchus had learned everything that he needed to know about Rome's military abilities, and he was readily prepared to plead for peace.²⁷ Within five days of his last defeat, King Bocchus' emissaries arrived in Marius' camp, requesting that he dispatch his two most loyal and respected officers to confer with the king over their common interests. Marius gladly agreed to open discussions with Bocchus, appointing his deputies, Sulla and Aulus Manlius, to the task.²⁸

The duo strode to meet the king, and when they arrived, Sulla presented a respectful and reasoned argument to the Mauretanian. He congratulated him on considering peace over war and underscored Rome's desire for harmony between the countries. He reassured the king that the Romans had no desire to govern his kingdom, but they always wanted more friends. Sulla confidently stated that the king's realm was safe from Roman encroachment. However, Sulla closed his speech with a not-so-subtle threat: 'Finally, let this thought sink into your heart, that the Roman people has never been outdone in kindness; its prowess in war you know by experience.'²⁹

Bocchus received Sulla's statements with grace, and of course, he claimed that he eagerly longed for peace with Rome too. He excused his involvement in the conflict as nothing more than a king dutifully protecting his kingdom. However, he noted that he had previously dispatched representatives to form a friendly treaty with Rome, but the Senate had originally spurned them. Nevertheless, following the

new developments, Bocchus resolved to try again. He wisely decided to send emissaries to Rome to sue for peace, but after Sulla had departed, the courtiers in Jugurtha's pay treacherously convinced the Mauretanian to cancel the envoys' mission.³⁰

Not long after, the indecisive Bocchus again determined that he should forward representatives to Rome. Therefore, five of Bocchus' most faithful relatives were vested with the power to agree to a peace treaty with the Republic, and the king dispatched them to first meet with Marius and then the Senate. However, their trip was interrupted while they were en route to confer with Marius. As they traversed the unforgiving terrain, bandits callously robbed them, but Bocchus' emissaries managed to escape with their lives. As they retreated from the brigands, they sought refuge with Sulla, who generously welcomed them into his camp and exhibited hospitality.³¹ After their brush with danger and meanderings through the desert, they couldn't have appeared as royal courtiers, but Sulla treated them well nonetheless.³² Upon learning of their purpose, he painstakingly trained them how to persuasively speak with the proper deference to Marius and the Senate. They remained with Sulla for forty days and eventually settled with him in Utica because Marius was attacking a Jugurthine desert fortification.

When Marius finally finished his winter siege, he returned to Cirta, where he summoned Sulla, Bocchus' envoys and all of the local Romans of the senatorial class. When they convened, the emissaries respectfully requested permission to speak to the Senate in Rome and humbly petitioned for a temporary armistice between the two warring nations. Marius and the assembled council were filled with hope and gladly approved the entreaties, and the Mauretanians departed to fulfill their mission. Of the king's five representatives, three anxiously sailed for Rome to form a peace treaty, and two returned to Mauretania to inform their king of the welcome developments.³³

When Bocchus' three emissaries reached Rome, they attempted to excuse their king's actions before the Senate and pleaded for a friendly alliance. Rome's official response was: 'The Senate and People of Rome are wont to remember both a benefit and an injury. But since Bocchus repents, they forgive his offence; he shall have a treaty of friendship when he has earned it.' Clearly, the Senate believed that Bocchus must atone for his transgressions and deliver Jugurtha to Marius for punishment in order to enter the state's good graces. Marius must have previously made this stipulation apparent to the

envoys, and consequently, the representatives certainly weren't taken by surprise by the Senate's requirement.³⁴

Bocchus was thrilled with the possibility of a peaceful resolution and alliance with Rome. He swiftly requested that Marius forward Sulla to him to finalize the agreement's details. Sulla, protected by cavalymen and lightly armoured auxiliaries, departed to confer with the king, but along his trek, Bocchus' son, Volux, joined him and generously offered to protect him with his Mauretanian cavalry. The two continued their journey towards Bocchus' court. However, within a few days, when Sulla was preparing his men to camp for the night, a panic-filled Volux rushed to warn Sulla that the wily Jugurtha and his troops were in close proximity. Volux suggested that Sulla should abandon his soldiers and flee with him. Sulla flatly refused to consider surreptitiously fleeing into the night, believing that Volux had betrayed him. Instead, he readied his men, ordered a night march and quietly left the camp with its fires still burning, giving the impression of an encamped and resting army. After advancing throughout the night, Sulla was informed that Jugurtha's force was within 2 miles of his position. Jugurtha apparently wasn't fooled by Sulla's clever ploy, and the Numidian had somehow kept pace with the Romans in the dark. Sulla and many of his soldiers believed that Volux had treacherously double-crossed the Romans, and Volux was forced to defend himself against deafening calls for his death. Volux implored Sulla to believe him, and while the Roman was sceptical, he agreed not to execute him. Then, in a calculated risk, Sulla and his retinue bravely marched towards Jugurtha's camp. After a tense moment, Sulla's gamble proved justified. As they neared the Numidian's force, the Romans and Mauretanians passed unchallenged. Jugurtha dared not entangle himself with Sulla and Volux under the present conditions, and the Romans and Mauretanians arrived in Bocchus' realm unmolested.³⁵

Once they were in the Mauretanian's sphere of influence, King Bocchus requested that Sulla provide a time, day and location for their conference, but the king's court was still infiltrated by Jugurthine sympathizers and agents. As a consequence, Sulla specified the hour and setting of their meeting, but he communicated to Bocchus that they should briefly speak in the presence of those whom Jugurtha had bribed. Then they ought to quickly adjourn and meet secretly where Jugurtha's spies would be unable to hear them.³⁶ Bocchus agreed and complied with Sulla's prudent plan, and in due time, Sulla arrived to

negotiate with the king. The public conference was a brief encounter in which Bocchus feigned indecision and asked for another ten days to consider his options, but this was merely a ploy to misinform the Jugurthine sympathizers. As Bocchus and Sulla had planned, they met in private later that day. The king, who genuinely liked Sulla, explained his contrivance with Jugurtha and newfound willingness to obey Rome's will.³⁷

*'Now hear a few words with regard to your country, as whose representative you have been sent hither. I did not make war on the Roman people and I never wished to do so; but I defended my realm with arms against armed invaders. Even that I now cease to do, since it is your wish. Carry on the war with Jugurtha as you think best. I shall not pass the river Muluccha, which was the boundary between Micipsa and myself, nor will I allow Jugurtha to do so. If you have anything further to ask which is honourable for us both, you shall not go away disappointed.'*³⁸

Friends or not, Sulla viewed his offer as comprehensively inadequate, and he knew that the Roman people would also. Yes, Marius had encroached upon Bocchus' territory, but they had been at war. Nevertheless, the only acceptable means to win peace was to deliver Jugurtha in chains to Sulla. The Roman made this abundantly clear to the king. Bocchus uncompromisingly refused Sulla's firm demands, offering a range of excuses, but Sulla was unmoved and pressed him further.³⁹ The Mauretanian countered that he would require the whole of Numidia as payment in return for betraying Jugurtha. Sulla must have steadfastly rejected his offer and explained that in exchange for Jugurtha, the king would be given peace and friendship, nothing more. However, Marius, Sulla and/or the Roman Senate may have agreed to honour Jugurtha's promise to award Bocchus a portion of the Numidian kingdom. Nevertheless, finding the Roman terms nonnegotiable, the Mauretanian king acquiesced to Sulla's demands, and the two planned their plot.⁴⁰

In accordance with the scheme that the two devised, Bocchus summoned Jugurtha to his presence, claiming that a favourable treaty could be obtained, but Jugurtha understandably declared that he had no faith in Rome's peace accords since they had been readily violated in the past. However, Jugurtha supposedly sensed a promising opportunity, and he sent word to Bocchus that he would only agree to travel to him under one condition. A conference must be arranged between Jugurtha and Sulla under the pretext of hashing out the treaty's terms, so that the Numidian could abduct Sulla.⁴¹ Sallust

alleged that Jugurtha believed that with a man of Sulla's stature in his custody, Rome would begrudgingly agree to a lenient and lasting peace to guarantee Sulla's well-being. This is obviously a historical revision by Sallust. Sulla was clearly not that important at the time. Holding a junior politician who hailed from an inconsequential family hostage simply wasn't nearly enough leverage to force a lasting peace agreement.⁴²

Regardless of Sallust's vivid imagination, a conference between Sulla, Jugurtha and Bocchus was organized, but the pretences of the meeting are unclear. Nonetheless, when Jugurtha arrived with a small armed guard, Bocchus' men immediately slew them and placed Jugurtha in chains. The Numidian was then surrendered to Sulla, and he promptly delivered the fallen king to an ecstatic Marius.⁴³ The Jugurthine War had vexed Rome since 112 BC or 111 BC, but by 105 BC, Gaius Marius had finally concluded the nagging conflict and had Jugurtha in chains. However, it took more than a mere few days to resolve the war like he had originally promised.⁴⁴

Sometime after Jugurtha was placed in the general's custody and was no longer a threat to Rome, Marius' lieutenant, Sulla, quickly attempted to capitalize on his role in the Jugurthine War. He proudly boasted that he, not Marius, had actually ended the war, and he even commissioned the creation of a seal, which depicted Jugurtha being surrendered to him. Sulla's assertion was largely false. Marius' strategy and hard-fought military victories are what caused Bocchus to sue for peace. Sulla, while effectively persuasive, collected Jugurtha after Rome had likely already made it clear that Bocchus must betray Jugurtha to the Republic to acquire peace. Even so, many of Marius' aristocratic enemies were quick to incorrectly attribute the victory to Sulla and Metellus, while negating Marius' many achievements. This, of course, enraged the jealous Marius, who loathed sharing honours, and this severely strained Marius' and Sulla's friendship. Nevertheless, the rift between Marius and Sulla was temporarily placed on hold because Marius was once again begged to defend Rome against another mighty foe.⁴⁵

VIII

CIMBRI

‘When [the Cimbri] engaged in battle they came on with the swiftness and force of fire, so that no one could withstand their onset, but all who came in their way became their prey and booty, and even many large Roman armies, with their commanders, who had been stationed to protect Transalpine Gaul, were destroyed ingloriously.’

– *Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus*

Rome was frequently embroiled in one conflict or another through most of its bellicose history, but by as late as 113 BC, a singular threat began to emerge that eventually consumed Rome’s attention and spawned an epidemic of fear. At some point in the latter part of the second century BC, a mysterious northern tribe known as the Cimbri abandoned their territory and wandered throughout Europe in search of booty and a new homeland. In time, Rome and the Cimbri encountered one another, but coexistence was apparently an unacceptable option, which ultimately necessitated Marius’ military expertise.¹

Little was known about the Cimbri in antiquity, and when the ancient writers weren’t blissfully ignorant about these tribesmen, they were often in disagreement regarding the Cimbri’s basic details, which complicates modern scholars’ ability to positively identify them. The Cimbri’s homeland was described as being situated on the outer sea’s coast and with forests so dense that light failed to penetrate its canopy. Because of its extreme northern location, the sun never fully set half of the year, and during the other half, darkness mostly blanketed the region. Allegedly, before they began roaming through Europe, the Cimbri lived in the territory between or near the Rhine and Elbe rivers, encompassing parts of modern Germany, the Netherlands and perhaps as far north as Denmark.² However, they may not have even originated from this region. They could have arrived there after a previous spate of nomadic meanderings, much like they did in the years following 113 BC.³

Supposedly, the Cimbri were displaced from their Northern European homeland due to rising sea levels, which left much of their land uninhabitable, but the Greek geographer Strabo considered this claim nonsensical. He contended that tides did not rise high enough to

ject an entire nation, nor did they advance without warning. He also noted that during Emperor Augustus' reign, more than eighty years later, there were still Cimbri living in the region near the Rhine and Elbe rivers. He believed that their presence refuted the assertion that the land was uninhabitable.⁴ However, simply because there were Cimbri living there decades later doesn't necessarily undermine the theory that a large portion of their ancestors' land became unfit for habitation. It is plausible that the population segment whose territory was devastated departed, while those inhabiting the still usable land remained. Moreover, Strabo's knowledge of sea levels and tides was certainly more limited than modern scientists. Today, it is commonly known that melting polar ice caps can cause rising sea levels. This may or may not account for the Cimbri's displacement, but it is also just as conceivable that some other catastrophic disaster, like a tsunami, caused widespread flooding, either in the short- or long-term, and was misconstrued as rising tides. Furthermore, if the Cimbri occupied the territory corresponding to the Netherlands, which was prone to devastating floods before the advent of their famous dykes, then their exodus is perfectly understandable. They simply preferred a home that didn't suffer from debilitating deluges.⁵

The Cimbri's identity has been a topic of disagreement for more than 2,000 years. Supposedly, the Cimbri were towering figures with bright blue eyes and light blonde hair, and most ancient and modern pundits assert that they were either Celtic/Gallic or Germanic.⁶ The bulk of the evidence, however, suggests that they were Celtic, but it remains an open debate, with valid arguments supporting the Germanic theory too. Regardless of whether they were Celtic, Germanic or something else, the Cimbri abandoned their homes in search of plunder and most of all new land to occupy, and they began a trek through Europe, which lasted over a decade.⁷

The Cimbri easily numbered in the hundreds of thousands, and this enormous horde travelled southward but inevitably came into contact with several wary tribes.⁸ These local natives were less than thrilled by the Cimbri's uninvited migration into their territory, which was surely accompanied by wanton violence and plundering. At some point, the Cimbri entered the Hercynian Forest, in southern Germany, where a tribe named the Boii lived, but they understandably refused to allow the Cimbri to settle on their land. The Boii forcefully expelled them from the Hercynian Forest, and as the Cimbri withdrew, they encountered the Scordisci, a Balkan tribe, that also adamantly denied

them admittance. By around 113 BC, perhaps when Marius was back in Rome, the Cimbri continued their circuitous trek towards the Alps. Their wanderings brought them near Noricum, which largely corresponds to modern-day Austria. One of the local tribes in Noricum were the Taurisci, and they were Roman allies. The Taurisci were naturally alarmed by the Cimbri's unwelcome presence in the region and consequently alerted Rome to the looming danger, which was perceived as a threat to the Republic itself. It is understandable that the Cimbri found no suitors willing to charitably donate free land to them. If a tribe admitted the Cimbri into their realm and awarded them large land grants, then the philanthropic natives would lose much of their own property and, ostensibly, profits. Furthermore, permitting a horde of hundreds of thousands of people could easily destabilize a native tribe's power structure, potentially leading to a coup, with the Cimbri becoming the new masters. Considering the possibilities, it's no wonder that the Taurisci asked for Rome's assistance to ward off the Cimbri.⁹

Rome had long aimed to be proactive in their defensive approach. They desired to fulfill their alliances and steadfastly defend Rome from potential threats beyond their horizon. So, when the Taurisci requested aid, Rome dutifully responded. One of the two consuls elected for 113 BC was Gnaeus Papirius Carbo, the father of Marius' future ally, and consul Carbo was tasked with raising and leading an army towards the Cimbri to investigate their intentions and safeguard the Republic. Ordinarily, this was an immense opportunity for a consul because it provided a chance to achieve immortality via a storied battle. The Roman victor could also acquire immense political power and riches by defeating an enemy, and Carbo leapt at the chance to attain enduring fame.

The consul marched his legionaries north through the Alps and into Noricum, where he occupied a defensible narrow pass. After he arrived, he may have manoeuvred to engage the imposing horde, but very quickly, respectful, conciliatory and repentant barbarian ambassadors greeted him. They apologized for trespassing on the Roman ally's territory, assuring Carbo that this provocation was a regrettable, albeit honest, mistake, which wouldn't reoccur. They surely explained that they were simply a displaced tribe searching for a new home that they hoped to acquire peacefully. Now that they understood the Roman dynamic in the area and that the Taurisci were unwilling to admit them, they would peacefully be on their way. The

consul was likely taken aback at the barbarians' tact and skilled diplomacy, which didn't fit the Romans' stereotypical view of uncivilized and irrational barbarians. After the Cimbri expressed their deep remorse, Carbo graciously commended them for admitting their errors and being willing to depart, never to return. To show his goodwill, he provided the tribesmen with guides to safely lead them away from Noricum. The homeless Cimbri couldn't have been especially excited about leaving the region, but at least they weren't forced into a risky confrontation with the renowned Roman legions. Considering the situation, they acquired a decent deal. There would be no war, and Rome provided complimentary guides to aid their departure.

The settlement, however, was a sham. Carbo never intended allowing the Cimbri to leave unharmed. He believed that by using deception he could score a cheap but resounding victory, which would bolster his wealth, power and popularity. He instructed the guides assigned to the Cimbri to lead the barbarians on a circuitous detour while he rushed his troops ahead of the Cimbri, where he planned to intercept and ambush them. Whether the guides relayed the deceitful scheme to the Cimbri, barbarian scouts observed the Roman troop movements or the tribe's enormous numbers simply overwhelmed the legions, the result was an abysmal Roman failure. As the two forces met near the alpine city of Noreia, droves of barbarians fell upon Carbo's troops, who struggled mightily to survive. When a great part of the Roman army was either dead or dying, the surviving legionaries were only saved by an act of nature. The sky blackened and a powerful thunderstorm erupted, permitting the Romans to retreat. They withdrew into the nearby darkened forest in complete disarray in small separate parties, and they were only able to find one another and reunite with their comrades three days later. Carbo was one of the survivors, and after this humiliating episode, he returned to Rome. However, he did so in great shame. The Romans believed that the gods were disgusted by Carbo's treacherous dealings and that his defeat was a manifestation of their displeasure.¹⁰

Squaring off against the Cimbri in battle must have been a terrifying task. Their immense numbers alone ensured that they were a formidable force, but their strange and alien nature also sparked terror in the legionaries. The Cimbri were larger in stature than the Romans, and they had bright blue eyes and blonde hair, which punctuated the marked differences between them.¹¹ The barbarians'

language was also foreign to the Romans, adding to the fear of the unknown, but their dissimilarities weren't limited to their native tongue or physical characteristics. Their martial behaviour was considered particularly peculiar. During combat operations, the Cimbri seem to have often relied on their speed and force of numbers to shock and overwhelm their enemies until they submitted.¹² In Cimbric battles, the tribesmen employed the use of great drums, which were created using large skins that were extended over their chariots' sides. Supposedly, the noise that they produced was powerful, awe-inspiring and intimidating. Also, interestingly, and unlike the Romans, the Cimbric wives accompanied the men when they were on campaign. These were no simple housewives though. They were tough, often armed and occasionally joined the battle's fray.

Cimbric priestesses also travelled with the army, ensuring that when the Cimbric battles concluded, the violence did not cease. These women wore white garments, wandered about barefoot and wielded swords as they sought out their victims. The priestesses placed crowns upon the heads of certain unfortunate captured enemy combatants and directed them to a staging area. With the prisoner of war presumably restrained, he was placed on a raised platform in the view of many. Then a priestess ceremonially slit the soldier's throat, permitting the blood to trickle into a brass receptacle. During the process, the priestess allegedly received some sort of prophecy from the gods, which was relayed to the Cimbri's leaders. Other times, the priestesses dissected their victims, examined their organs and searched for clues to predict military outcomes. Unfortunately for Carbo's soldiers, it is entirely possible that an unlucky few met this ghastly sacrificial fate.¹³

Carbo's defeat placed Rome in a precarious position. With the Alpine passes relatively unguarded, the Romans demoralized and a consular army defeated, the victorious Cimbri could easily have invaded the Italian peninsula, but they didn't. Rather than penetrating Rome's domain, the tribesmen turned westward and marched into Gaul, which comprised much of the Alpine regions and modern-day France. For several years, they roamed about in Gaul as they sought a new home, and they undoubtedly terrorized local tribes and ravaged the countryside.¹⁴

By 109 BC, Rome had not forgotten the humiliating defeat at the Cimbri's hands, nor did they feel safe with this dangerous barbarian

horde lurking near their sphere of influence. When the Cimbri were still in Gaul, they must have either approached Rome's regional interests or committed some other provocation, because the Republic dispatched another army to confront the barbarian menace. Marius' benefactor, Metellus, was co-consul with Marcus Junius Silanus in 109 BC. While Metellus was assigned to deal with the Jugurthine threat, Silanus was appointed to lead Rome's troops towards the Cimbri.

As Silanus neared the barbarians with his legions, they sent suppliant ambassadors to negotiate a peaceful resolution with him, and he dutifully forwarded them to Rome, where they presented their earnest pleas before the Senate. There is some confusion as to whether this occurred before or after the eventual battle with Silanus, but regardless, their message was the same. They humbly asked the Roman people to permit them to purchase land on which to settle, and they even offered to serve in Rome's legions so long as they were allowed a permanent home. While this was the preferred standard operating procedure for the later Roman Empire, the Republican Senate unhesitatingly denied their entreaties, and the Cimbric representatives returned to the front empty-handed. Considering that the Senate already feared the barbarians' massive numbers, it comes as no surprise that they unyieldingly opposed settling the massive tribe anywhere near Rome. One of the purported causes of Rome's denial was that they were simply unable to provide any land for the tribesman since Rome was in the midst of an agrarian resettlement programme. Whether this excuse was employed or not, at this point, the Senate would have never allowed hundreds of thousands of barbarians to relocate to their territory. Rome did not wish to exude weakness, but bowing to the Cimbric demands would have reeked of negotiating from a vulnerable position. The Senate was concerned that if they exhibited anything but strength, then it would generate reprisals, uprisings and invasions into their growing realm. Even with these issues aside, it would have been an arduous task to satisfactorily and expeditiously locate land for a population as large as the Cimbri.¹⁵

The Roman and Cimbric armies continued facing one another, but after the Senate turned the emissaries away, it was inevitable that they would clash once again. With the negotiations seeming fruitless, a battle broke out between the two in either 109 BC or 108 BC, perhaps near Lake Geneva, but details of the encounter unfortunately do not exist.¹⁶ The result, however, was no different than the battle in 113 BC. The barbarians routed the legions again, and another consul

returned to Rome in failure.

Just as before, the path to Rome lay primarily unimpeded, but the Cimbri chose not to invade. Instead, they remained in Gaul, where they sought a new home and wealth from raids.¹⁷ However, the Cimbric victories in Gaul and their subsequent rise destabilized the region and challenged Rome's local authority. As a result, there were a number of uprisings in Rome's Gallic sphere of influence. By 107 BC, Marius' co-consul, Lucius Cassius Longinus, was sent out to reassert Roman dominance in the area, but a Gallic tribe named the Tigurini ambushed his army, killing Longinus and defeating his legions. It is not entirely clear whether or not the Tigurini were working in concert with the Cimbri at this time, but eventually, the two apparently formed an alliance. Nevertheless, Rome's survivors were forced to accept humiliating terms, whereby they delivered hostages to the Tigurini to guarantee their good behaviour, surrendered half of their supplies and marched under the yoke of submission.¹⁸

Around 105 BC, the Cimbri turned towards Rome's interests in south-eastern Gaul, possibly along with their new allies, the Teutones, Ambrones and Tigurini. They were northern barbarian tribes who at some point decided to join the Cimbri's crusade against the Romans.¹⁹ However, after their possibly random previous encounters with Rome, the Cimbri must have been aware that this provocation would end in another bloody conflict with the Republic. Prior to their invasion of this region, Rome had probably attempted to regroup and return parts of Gaul into its sphere of influence. It is also entirely plausible that in response, the Cimbri veered towards Rome to remove the Republic's newly re-established influence beyond the Alps. If they were able to negate Rome's sway in south-eastern Gaul, then they could assert their own dominance and potentially settle without the Republic's involvement.²⁰

To meet the incoming Cimbri, Rome raised another army led by the consul Gnaeus Mallius Maximus, who was sent to govern a portion of Gaul and ready its defence. However, there was already another Roman army in the field, which was commanded by Quintus Servilius Caepio, a provincial governor in an adjacent section of Gaul.²¹ Combined, the two men may have had as many as 80,000 soldiers under their command, including allied auxiliary units, but the two Romans refused to coordinate with one another.²² As a governor, Caepio was Consul Maximus' subordinate, but he was jealous of Maximus' authority and concerned that the consul might gain the

glory for smiting the Cimbri, not himself. Consequently, the two primarily functioned independently of one another, with harrowing results.²³

One of Maximus' subordinates was Marcus Aurelius Scaurus. In 108 BC, he had served as a suffect consul, which meant that he served the remainder of the term of an originally elected consul who had vacated his post. By 105 BC, Scaurus commanded a small force under Maximus, who may have dispatched him to scout the enemy's location.²⁴ He located the Cimbri, but unfortunately for Scaurus, they noticed him as well. The two briefly sparred, but the Cimbri had no problem defeating his small unit. Either during this skirmish or while the Romans were retreating, Scaurus fell from his horse and was captured. After being apprehended, he stood honourably before the imposing Cimbri and refused to defile himself by complying with their traitorous demands. They urged him to lead the Cimbric army, presumably against the Romans, but upon hearing their abhorrent suggestion, he rejected their offer and declined to betray his country. During this affair, he was kept under guard, but an opportunity arose which would have permitted him to flee from the Cimbri. However, he couldn't bear the thought of escaping and surviving while many of his men perished. Instead, he resolved to remain in the Cimbri's custody, but considering Scaurus of no use, the barbarians killed the former suffect consul.²⁵

Following Scaurus' capture and execution, consul Maximus summoned Caepio to discuss the war effort and support his legions against the Cimbri, but Caepio insubordinately instructed Maximus to govern his own province and leave him to his own devices.²⁶ However, Caepio's tone eventually changed slightly, and he agreed to aid his superior. He announced to his troops that they were marching to save the frightened consul from certain defeat. When he arrived, he obstinately refused to discuss a battle plan with his superior, coordinate with Maximus or incorporate his soldiers into the consul's command. They were essentially two loosely allied armies, operating independently of one another.²⁷

As the Cimbri likely predicted, they were confronted by a Roman army, but unexpectedly, it was a fractured force. Both Roman generals failed to cooperate, with the intransigent Caepio bearing the majority of the blame. Despite the lack of collaboration, Maximus committed a strategic blunder that haunted Rome for years. The consul positioned his troops facing the Cimbri and perhaps the Teutones, Ambrones and

Tigurini, but the legionaries' backs were to the Rhone River, which made any potential retreat highly problematic.²⁸ Given that the Cimbric coalition may have numbered as many as 300,000 soldiers, which dwarfed the Roman army, Rome couldn't afford careless mistakes of this nature.²⁹ Yet, despite the horde's size and the Cimbri's past successes, Caepio selfishly refused to play a supporting role to Maximus. So, Caepio marched his legionaries to the battlefield and unwisely positioned them in front of the consul's troops. He hoped that he would be the first to encounter the enemy, and if they were defeated, then he would likely be recognized as the general who vanquished the barbarians, not Maximus.³⁰

Once again, the tribesmen first sought out a peaceful resolution by dispatching representatives to speak with the Romans, but their terms had changed since their repeated victories. The emissaries demanded that Maximus, as the highest-ranking Roman present, provide them with free land on which to settle and grain to sustain their enormous numbers in exchange for a truce, but the Romans steadfastly rejected their terms and refused to meekly capitulate. As a result, the barbarian envoys were dismissed without a peace accord, but the Cimbric messengers unknowingly sparked a senseless internal Roman dispute.³¹ The fact that they had correctly recognized Maximus as Caepio's superior sent the governor into a jealous rage, and he nearly ordered the barbarian representatives to be murdered. Yet, Caepio's soldiers managed to temporarily calm their volatile general and persuade him to confer with Maximus. Unfortunately for Rome, the conference was a terrible failure, ending with the two disrespectfully parting.³²

With negotiations between the Romans and barbarians proving to be futile, the opposing armies inevitably began to fight. The conflict occurred at Arausio, which is in the agricultural centre of Orange in south-eastern France, but the details of the battle are practically non-existent. The Romans were certainly handicapped because their two separate armies, totalling at most 80,000 soldiers, occupied a strategically inferior battle position and refused to cooperate.³³ Engaging in warfare under these circumstances while facing a unified force of hundreds of thousands of barbarians was suicidal. It occurred nonetheless. By assuming the forward position, Caepio surely encountered the Cimbri and their allies first, but he was routed. Initially, his troops probably defended their posts with vigour, but as relentless waves of barbarians smashed into the legionaries' shields,

Roman discipline quickly gave way to terror. Caepio's army was either outflanked or his ranks were fractured by the tribal onslaught, and once his soldiers realized their perilous situation, they deserted their battle stations in disorder. Maximus' troops likely watched in dread as Caepio's men fled into their own ranks, causing panic and confusion in the Roman lines. The tribesmen were not far behind, and they collided with Maximus' ill-prepared and fearful legionaries. Like Caepio's experience, Maximus' troops fell victim to the barbarians and were also sent to flight. The Cimbri easily defeated both Caepio and Maximus, but with the Rhone River to the Romans' backs, retreat wasn't an option for most, which meant that their rout developed into an unadulterated massacre.³⁴

Between 60,000 and 80,000 soldiers from the Roman allied force died at Arausio, and apparently 40,000 more were slain. These were the merchants who supplied the Roman camps and the legionaries' servants who accompanied them while they were deployed. Orosius amazingly claimed that only ten Romans survived the carnage, but like many exceptionally large or small numbers in ancient writings, this statistic should be treated with some scepticism. Nonetheless, Rome suffered a defeat of colossal proportions. Following the bulk of the slaughter, the barbarians proceeded to destroy all of the Roman booty and tossed it into the Rhone River, which may have served as an offering to their gods. The captured Romans and horses were no better off. The horses were needlessly drowned in the river and the legionaries were hung to death, a despicable end for the battle's prisoners of war. It's also quite possible that a few unlucky captured Romans were chosen by Cimbric priestesses to be ritually sacrificed, and if they were, then they were forced to endure the slow, painful death of disembowelment or exsanguination.³⁵

If the casualty numbers are accurate, then the Battle of Arausio was one of Roman history's most comprehensive defeats. The slaughter of up to 80,000 soldiers in a single day outnumbered the horrific losses even at Cannae, where the Carthaginian Hannibal thoroughly destroyed an enormous Roman army, generating mass hysteria in Rome. The Cimbri had previously routed Roman armies, but the legions hadn't been obliterated to the utmost degree until Arausio. Once more, following another Roman rout, the road lay open for the Cimbri to invade Italy if they wished, but as before, they didn't venture beyond the Alps for the time being.³⁶

News of the disaster at Arausio reached Rome and sent the families

of the slain into mourning and its citizens into a panic.³⁷ Despite surviving the battle and returning to Rome, Maximus was relegated to political impotence as he and his subordinate Caepio were prosecuted for mishandling the conflict.³⁸ Maximus' co-consul was a man who had served in Numantia and Numidia, Publius Rutilius Rufus. After the Cimbri routed Maximus' and Caepio's legionaries, Rufus essentially acted as Rome's sole consul, and he instituted reforms to prepare for the Cimbri's possible invasion, which was assumed to be imminent. He quickly raised a force to defend Rome against their potential incursion and even employed gladiatorial instructors to help train the freshly levied troops. He also forced all young men to swear an oath to not leave Italy, and he forbade Roman males under the age of 25 from boarding boats to ensure that no able men escaped their duty of defending the Republic.³⁹

Up to this point, no Roman had been able to vanquish the Cimbri, and the Romans understandably feared for their lives. However, unlike the struggle with Jugurtha, which never really endangered the Roman homeland, the Cimbric threat posed a direct and undeniable risk to Rome. The episode conjured up visions of two terrifying epochs in Roman history in which the Republic struggled to survive. In 390 BC, a northern Celtic tribe had traversed the Alps and marched into the Italian peninsula. The enormous barbarian horde inevitably clashed with the Romans, who were easily routed and only avoided complete annihilation because the barbarian king expected an ambush. After the Roman defeat, the path to Rome was open, and its defences were trivial. Seeing no sizeable organized opposition, the Celts marched on Rome and easily overwhelmed the eternal city. Other than the citadel where many terrified citizens huddled, the Celtic tribe controlled most of Rome, but hunger drove the Romans to agree to a humiliating compromise. The Celts promised to withdraw in exchange for a prodigious 1,000lb of gold, and the Romans took the deal. Using large scales, the barbarians weighed the precious metal as it was surrendered, but the Romans suspected that the Celts had deceptively rigged the scales in order to obtain more gold. When they complained, the tribe's king, who was named Brennus, tossed his sword on the scales, glared at the Romans and summed up his pithy response in two words – 'Vae victis!' – which is translated as 'Woe to the vanquished!' The Republic was humiliated, and for the time being, its subjects felt helpless. Fortunately for the Romans, one of their prized generals, Marcus Furius Camillus, arrived at the head of an army at the last moment, saved Rome and destroyed the barbarian

menace.⁴⁰

More than 170 years later, Rome was once again at the mercy of a hostile invader. The infamous Hannibal and his war elephants crossed the Alps and into the Republic's territory, and he inflicted such terrible defeats upon the Roman armies that the Republic felt powerless against his cunning. In response, they employed what became known as the Fabian strategy, whereby they completely avoided large risky military engagements with the Carthaginian. This permitted Hannibal to terrorize the Roman countryside with near impunity for roughly a decade before the war's tide shifted and Scipio Africanus invaded Carthage, which prompted Hannibal's withdrawal and ultimate defeat.⁴¹

The Cimbric threat was ominously reminiscent of the Hannibalic episode and the Celtic sack of Rome, and the Romans fully grasped the seriousness of the situation. They understandably wished to avoid a reoccurrence of the previous invasions of the Italian peninsula, but after Arausio, the Cimbri could easily penetrate Rome's domain and threaten the Republic's very survival, just as the Celts and Carthaginians once did. However, in both cases, able generals saved the Republic after Rome had suffered devastating losses. In 105 BC, Rome once again hoped for a great commander who could safeguard the Republic, and while this period seemed quite ominous, there was still a glimmer of hope. News of Marius' victory over the tenacious Jugurtha must have provided the anxious Romans temporary relief and a worthwhile reason to celebrate. With Jugurtha in chains, one major protracted warzone finally concluded. This freed much of Rome's valuable resources and permitted its rising star and most able general to mount Rome's defence against the Cimbri. The Romans prayed that Marius would be their generation's Marcus Furius Camillus or Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus.

IX

TRIUMPH

‘Soon, however, all this envy and hatred and slander of Marius was removed and dissipated by the peril which threatened Italy from the west, as soon as the state felt the need of a great general and looked about for a helmsman whom she might employ to save her from so great a deluge of war.’

– *Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus*

After Jugurtha was delivered to Marius in 105 BC, the Jugurthine War essentially ended, but minor pockets of resistance probably still existed, which demanded Marius’ attention.¹ Once he had addressed these issues, he busied himself with dividing Numidia and installing its new king. Rome recognized Marius’ ally, Gauda, as Numidia’s monarch, and the general faithfully fulfilled his promise to Gauda and placed the simpleton on the throne. There were certain expectations in exchange for Gauda’s new prominent role in Numidia. His kingdom was to serve as Rome’s client state, and he was to obey and aid Rome when required.² His territory, however, was reduced substantially. Earlier in the conflict, Jugurtha formed a pact with King Bocchus of Mauretania, promising him one third of his domain in exchange for a successful alliance against Rome. After accepting the deal, Bocchus eventually betrayed Jugurtha and aided Rome instead. To reward the king, it appears that the Republic honoured the greater part of Jugurtha’s deal with the Mauretanian and a large portion of western Numidia was reassigned to Bocchus’ kingdom, which probably allayed his concerns about double-crossing Jugurtha. Nevertheless, it won Rome a dedicated ally, but Bocchus and Gauda weren’t the only Africans to benefit from the war.³ At some point in the conflict, a number of the Gaetulians decided to side with Marius, and following the war’s conclusion, he generously rewarded them with land grants.⁴

Around the time that Marius apprehended Jugurtha, if not a little later, news of the disaster at Arausio reached the general. His reaction was probably like the rest of Rome’s, one of shock, but somehow, Marius became the Republic’s answer to the Cimbric problem. While still in Africa, the general received word that, *in absentia*, he had been elected to his second consulship and assigned to lead Rome’s legions against the Cimbri. It was entirely illegal for anyone to serve as consul

more than once in any ten-year period. Given that Marius' first consular term had been in 107 BC and he was set to become consul again in 104 BC, this was a clear constitutional violation. Furthermore, it was highly irregular to elect someone to the state's highest post *in absentia*. Nevertheless, the public apparently made an exception for Marius in this dire period, and the Romans cast their votes for him while he was still in Africa. The election was obviously illegitimate, but if it was conducted without Marius' knowledge, which it surely wasn't, then he could have easily refused the consulship. He was under no obligation to accept the unlawful office, but he gladly did, despite its illegality. He likely knew that there was a campaign to elect him to the consulship. He was a senator and a power broker. The masses adored him, and many influential Romans supported him. With his long list of allies and professional connections, it is incredibly unlikely that his election occurred without his knowledge. In all likelihood, he was probably vigorously committed to obtaining the office once again and steadfastly pursued it.

The ancient writers asserted that the people demanded Marius' leadership to save the state from the barbarian menace. Therefore, they wished to see him as consul and general, but this is probably an overly idealized representation of what really transpired. Rome was certainly in a panic, and Marius was quickly identified as a rising star and gifted general who might be able to vanquish the Cimbri. However, it seems incredibly ignorant to believe that he was elected without his knowledge or even active involvement. Marius undoubtedly coveted the Cimbric command and perhaps the consulship too, but he likely feared Metellus' fate. He had been elected to the consulship of 109 BC and was assigned to the Numidian front. After his term expired, he was granted proconsular authority to continue leading the campaign. Proconsuls were officials who were often appointed rather than elected to govern a province and/or prosecute a war. By 107 BC, after being elected to the consulship, Marius thanklessly stripped Metellus of his generalship and had the command transferred to himself. Marius probably worried that if he were asked to lead the effort against the Cimbri as a proconsul, then another up-and-coming military man might also attempt to revoke his command, much like he did to Metellus. He likely believed that if he were a consul, then he could better protect his leadership role in the coming Cimbric campaign and receive all of the glory if the Cimbri were neutralized. However, he may have also simply desired to hold

the state's top position for its concomitant prestige and influence, but holding two consulships within a ten-year period was relatively rare. This could have given Marius an additional incentive to seek the post. If the constitution was deliberately violated on his behalf, then his unrivalled importance would be publicly demonstrated, or so he may have thought.

Marius, above all, had an insatiable appetite for glorious recognition and power, and he knew how to leverage the state's different mechanisms and influence the public to his benefit. Just as he organized a clever campaign to secure his first consular election, he was likely actively involved in his second consular bid. Marius surely viewed the Cimbric crisis as an exploitable opportunity for himself and made it clear that he was extremely interested in being re-elected. He may have even skillfully initiated an effective public opinion campaign by instructing his allies to spread the word that he was the only Roman capable of saving the Republic from the pending disaster. They probably also claimed that Marius could only ensure Rome's safety by serving as consul.

Marius' history is peppered with examples of him utilizing tribunes to promote his political goals and ambitions, and it seems likely that he employed their use at this juncture too. He may have persuaded one or more influential tribunes to present and endorse the idea of his illicit consulship to the people in order to win them over. Marius was immensely popular and loved by the poor plebeians and influential equestrians, and with their wholehearted support, his opposition apparently had few ways to prevent his re-election. They still tried nonetheless, and they protested what was clearly an illegal election. However, their attempts were in vain. A great number of Romans concluded that constitutional mandates had previously been skirted during grave emergencies, which set the risky precedent that it was sometimes permissible to violate the constitution. In Marius' case, they obdurately contended that his election was for the greater good of Rome and was necessitated by the danger that the Cimbri posed.

If Marius was really the Republic's only answer to the Cimbric crisis and his goals were sincerely altruistic, then there were other options without violating the constitutional parameters that outlined the state's highest office. The Senate or the people could have appointed Marius as a proconsul and vested him with the power to command the war with the barbarians. Marius could also have been assigned to serve as a legally elected consul's legate, which would

have provided the executive officeholder with the necessary counsel and leadership to lead the war effort. There were still other offices that Marius could have sought to allow him to hold an influential military position without violating the consulship's constitutional limits. These were, however, much less prominent roles that certainly received less credit and a relatively inconsequential amount of glory. Nevertheless, the people all too hastily disregarded the constitution out of fear, and after fighting for the post, Marius readily accepted the consulship. His assumption of the office could have been a blatant power grab or possibly due to good, albeit misguided intentions. He may have believed that breaking the law was the only way to save the Republic. Regardless of the impetus of Marius' re-election bid or the eventual fallout, Rome allowed the constitution to be circumvented, which was a dangerous precedent. Nonetheless, Marius was confirmed as one of the consuls for 104 BC, along with Gaius Flavius Fimbria. Unsurprisingly, Marius was also appointed to lead Rome's legions against the Cimbri.⁵

Once Marius concluded the Numidian campaign and was informed of his unorthodox election and Cimbric assignment, he sailed from Africa to Rome. He arrived at the city's gates on the Calends of January (1 January) 104 BC and entered Rome a hero.⁶ He was awarded a magnificent triumph for his victory in Numidia, which was a great honour.⁷ Triumphs were essentially celebratory processions meant to publicly recognize military successes and honour victorious generals. Receiving a triumph was a prestigious award gained by few, but it was nearly every Roman commander's goal. However, specific criteria were used to determine who qualified for a triumph.⁸

Roman triumphs supposedly traced their origins to Rome's founder, Romulus, when he defeated the nearby Caeninenses and returned to Rome with the spoils of war. Regardless of the legend's veracity, triumphs were extravagant and relatively infrequent festivities for much of the Republic's existence. The power to award a triumph lay with the Senate, barring a few exceptions, and the process of securing the honour began immediately following a battle. After a great military victory, generals were expected to forward dispatches detailing their exploits to the Senate, and if the engagements were found to be legitimate and noteworthy, then the Senate might declare a public thanksgiving for the good fortunes. After years of failure in Numidia, Metellus arrived in Africa and began to reverse Rome's misfortunes, and for his success, the grateful Senate approved a public

thanksgiving for his victories. Public thanksgivings were often, but not always, the first step in acquiring a triumph.⁹

After a conflict concluded and a victorious general and his legionaries were returning or had arrived outside Rome, the Senate investigated the battle's details to determine if it warranted a triumph. The guidelines governing which engagements and commanders qualified for the honour were strictly adhered to for the most part. Among the many requirements, only military engagements against a foreign enemy whereby at least 5,000 combatants were slain merited a triumph. The Roman losses were also required to be relatively negligible by comparison. The consequence of the battle had to be favourable to Rome, and peace must be achieved in the region to deserve the illustrious honour. Triumphs were awarded for great victories, but only the most senior military official involved was permitted to be the honour's primary recipient. Commanding generals must hold the office of dictator, consul, praetor, proconsul or propraeor to be considered for the distinction. A senior deputy who was instrumental in concluding a conflict was not permitted to receive a triumph; only his superior qualified. For instance, during the Jugurthine War, Sulla played a major role in concluding the conflict, but he didn't meet the requirements for a triumph for many reasons, including that he was Marius' lieutenant. Only Marius could be awarded the honour in that conflict.

Once the Senate agreed that a military event was worthy of a triumph, they approved the measure and even earmarked public funding to bankroll the momentous occasion. Marius' case was probably not much different, but he may have had to contend with some degree of senatorial animosity. Marius was of the senatorial class, but much of the Senate was comprised of aristocrats who were inimical towards the general. Nonetheless, they could not realistically refuse the general a triumph. If they did, then they risked a major public backlash, and they would likely offend the man whom they hoped would save them from the barbarian horde. Considering that the Cimbri were threatening their homeland, Marius enjoyed overwhelming public support and as he had earned a triumph, the Senate really had no choice but to approve the honour, which they did.¹⁰

As Rome prepared for the grand spectacle and festivities that normally accompanied triumphs, throngs of Romans filled the streets, lined the roofs and waited for an opportunity to behold Rome's spoils,

soldiers and most of all, its newest hero. When the highly anticipated procession commenced, the triumphal cavalcade entered Rome and followed the Via Sacra, one of the city's main thoroughfares. It led to the Capitoline Hill, a westerly hill in Rome that overlooked the forum. While there were hundreds of different triumphs in Rome's long history, the procession usually adhered to a rough prescribed formula of participants, attire and order of arrangement. Marching at the forefront of the parade were the senators and elected officials, who surely greeted the spectators with smiles and waves and hoped to publicly attach themselves to the splendour. They were followed by a troupe of trumpeters, who sounded the arrival of the procession's first spectacular scene. Then Rome was treated to the sight of wagons laden with the war's precious booty and images of the conflict.¹¹ Marius' spoils included over 3,000lb of gold, nearly 5,800lb of silver and almost 290,000 coins. The carts loaded with Jugurtha's riches must have produced a jaw-dropping sight.¹² In addition to the immense wealth captured in the Jugurthine War, it is likely that images of the battles, foreign landscapes and climactic scenes were presented, as well as effigies of the enemies. There were probably idealized representations of Marius' battlefield successes against Jugurtha and Bocchus, art depicting the capture of Jugurtha's impregnable strongholds and images recreating tense moments. Next, an ensemble of flute players marched through Rome and filled its streets with brilliant music, which announced the triumph's next stage. The flutists were trailed by sacrificial beasts that were specially decorated for the occasion, and they were accompanied by priests who would later participate in the animals' upcoming sacrifices. After this, Romans were frequently treated with the appearance of any natives or exotic animals that were captured during the conflict. It is very possible that Marius transported a corps of humbled prisoners of war and some of Africa's wild beasts for their entertainment value, including elephants, which were then exhibited during the celebratory occasion.¹³

Behind the exotic animals and disgraced captives was an exhibition of the vanquished army's insignia and their captured or surrendered weapons. The peculiar arms, beasts and foreign prisoners were surely a sight to behold, but following them was one of the procession's climaxes. This was when Rome viewed, often for the first time, the enemy's leaders and their families.¹⁴ In Marius' case, the shrewd King Jugurtha and two of his sons moped in chains along the Via Sacra, where they were surely prodded along by their compassionless

handlers.¹⁵ They received an onslaught of jeers and offences from the spectators and were utterly humiliated. Jugurtha was once a powerful and wealthy royal who was a prized Roman ally. After his capture, he was a disgraced and powerless captive. He was forced to march through his enemy's capital in a procession dedicated to his defeat and vanquisher. However, he acutely understood that his public and personal shame would soon end as his future was doomed.¹⁶

Immediately behind the humbled Numidian were the signs and symbols of the triumphator's office and then the man of the hour, Marius. He ritually rode in a ceremonial chariot drawn by four horses, overlooking the defeated king and passing by the adoring and applauding Romans. If Marius followed the prescribed formula, then he was dressed in the *toga picta*, a toga reserved primarily for this momentous occasion. It was purple, decorated with gold embroidery and was accompanied by a flowered tunic called the *tunica palmata*. In his left hand, he grasped a sceptre and in his right a laurel branch, symbols of victory and power. Resting on his head was a crown-like Delphic laurel wreath, and he may have even had his face painted red so that he resembled the statues of the god Jupiter. All of the attention and ceremonial attire raised the triumphator's stature and approached that of a king or even a deity. However, it was short-lived, and the triumphator was reminded that he was just a man. At some point in Roman history, which may have postdated Marius, an armed public slave accompanied the celebrated generals and reminded them that they were not kings or gods. The slave held a crown above the triumphator's head and whispered in his ear, 'Look behind you and remember that you are a man.'

During the procession, the triumphator's sons often accompanied the celebrated commander or trailed behind along with his valued deputies. Marius' son was likely around four years old at the time, and he may have been present at the triumph. However, he was likely too young to ride a horse behind Marius, but it is certainly possible that he joined Marius in the triumphal chariot. The procession's final display was Marius' army. Marching in order, they filed through the city in polished garb and with their spears decorated with laurel, but their advance through the city was hardly solemn and silent. They sang hymns praising the gods, shouted their unwavering support for their general and even repeated bawdy jokes at their commander's expense, in good fun of course. The procession generally took the greater part of a day, but some triumphs lasted as long as three days.¹⁷

The triumph concluded on the Capitoline Hill, where priests sacrificed the designated beasts and the triumphator dutifully surrendered his laurel wreath to the statue of Jupiter, transferring much of his temporary, albeit symbolic, power to the deity. The celebratory activities were not over, however. Frequently, at the conclusion of a triumph, the prized captives were ingloriously strangled to death after they were thrown into a dungeon, which was likely the Tullianum, a building on the Capitoline Hill that was used to temporarily house condemned, or soon-to-be damned, men.¹⁸ The details surrounding Jugurtha's fate are contradictory. One ancient author claimed that Jugurtha was imprisoned, but in the process, his royal clothes were ripped from his body and his golden earring was torn from his ear, detaching his ear lobe. The nude king was then heaved into a dungeon, and in a fit of delirium, he smiled and sarcastically exclaimed, 'Hercules! How cold this Roman bath is!' After six days in his cell without food, Rome's stubborn foe finally succumbed to death.¹⁹ Another source presents a much different and less dramatic end. The ancient historian Orosius averred that Jugurtha was simply strangled to death following Marius' triumph and likely discarded in the Tiber River.²⁰ Regardless of the differing accounts, when the triumphal procession concluded towards the end of the day, the festivities continued. Generally, a large public banquet was prepared, and the Romans feasted and drank into the night while enjoying the reception's entertainment. The celebrations eventually drew to a close, and the triumphator was escorted home by admiring and probably highly intoxicated Romans, who lit the way with torches.²¹

In Marius' case, however, the sequence of events was somewhat different. Marius had just arrived in Rome, and it was the first day of his second consulship. Rome was also in the midst of an existential crisis due to the Cimbric menace, and while the triumph briefly diverted their widespread consternation, public business had to resume. After the sacrifices, Marius convened the Senate to address the Republic's needs, but he committed a major *faux pas*. There was a strict dress code of sorts in ancient Rome depending on Romans' ages, stature, official rank and even for different occasions. During Senate proceedings, there was an expectation to be clothed in the appropriate toga, but following his triumph, Marius was still dressed in his triumphal attire when he met with the Senate.²² The senatorial garb was much simpler compared to the celebratory outfit. It was a white toga with a stripe on its outer border to denote the wearer's notable

current or previous rank.²³ Supposedly, when Marius entered the Senate meeting on this occasion, it was the first time in the Republic's history that a Roman had done so adorned in triumphal garb. Marius' affront deeply offended some of the other senators, who believed that this breach of etiquette was a deliberate act aimed at extending his recent celebratory honour, disrespectfully displaying his recognition as a celebrated Roman or demonstrating his special importance over the rest of the Senate. Marius should have foreseen this response, since he was of the senatorial class. Perhaps he was in such a hurry to begin his consulship and defence of Rome that he either forgot to change into the senatorial attire or believed the disapproving reaction would be negligible. He may have also done exactly what the Senate believed and purposefully remained clothed in the celebratory robes to shamefully flaunt his recently elevated standing in Rome.²⁴

Marius quickly perceived that his senatorial colleagues were genuinely insulted. To address his offence, he rushed through a wardrobe change, but it could hardly have been swift.²⁵ Properly draping a Roman toga over oneself was a cumbersome process, requiring the unwieldy woolen garment to be folded multiple times. Some Romans even required slaves to assist them with the multi-step procedure. Once the toga was worn, it was an impractical and restricting article of clothing that was miserable to wear during Italy's warm summers. It is really surprising that Roman togas were worn for as long as they were.²⁶ Nonetheless, Marius disrobed and returned in the appropriate attire. The ancient writers didn't recount what subjects were considered during the meeting, but there was really only one pressing issue at the time. Even though Rome was pleased to have a reason to celebrate after a spate of embarrassing losses to the Cimbri, they weren't sure of the tribesmen's immediate intentions, but the threat weighed heavily upon them. They were concerned that the barbarians might invade the Italian peninsula, and therefore, Rome immediately needed to ready its defence and prepare to meet the enemy in the field, preferably away from the heart of Rome. The discussions surely centred around levying an army, equipping it and maybe even the coming war's strategy. Regardless of the Senate's grudges against Marius or his perceived offences, time was of the essence and Rome was in dire need of a successful general to prosecute the war against the Cimbri. As a result, Marius quickly set out to prepare his soldiers.²⁷

MULI MARIANI

‘The Romans were unwilling to risk battle with [the barbarians] under any other general.’

Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus

Following Marius’ splendid triumph, his consular and military duties resumed, and he focused his energies on safeguarding the Republic from certain disaster. To meet the barbarian horde, Marius began assembling an army capable of challenging the Cimbri, but interestingly, he didn’t simply recycle his Jugurthine War legions. His new army was largely comprised of former consul Publius Rutilius Rufus’ legions, which included many troops who had never served under the general before, but Marius presumably also transferred some of his veterans to his new force. There’s no clear reason why he chose to lead a predominantly inexperienced force over an army of seasoned soldiers. One of the ancient authors claimed, seemingly erroneously, that Marius chose fresh recruits over his veteran legionaries because the new army was smaller and more agile, and he found them more trustworthy. This is certainly false, considering that his Numidian legions were obedient, performed with distinction and respected the general’s leadership and even his strict style of command. Moreover, the Cimbri were an enormous people numbering in the hundreds of thousands. To desire a smaller army to meet this gargantuan force seems counterproductive, especially given that the tribesmen had routed a number of Roman armies in the past.¹

There are at least two possible reasons why he didn’t transfer his loyal soldiers wholesale from one front to another. Many of his veteran legionaries had served since the beginning of the Jugurthine War in 111 BC, if not before. He may have discharged a sizeable portion of them because of their length of service, their desire to enter the civilian life and start a family or to reward those who served with conspicuous honour, but he likely re-enrolled many of the remaining troops into his new army. Alternatively, it is possible that he believed that the Cimbric threat was imminent, so there wasn’t sufficient time to transport to Italy the rest of his forces, which were presumably encamped in the Roman province of Africa.

Marius assiduously sought soldiers from other sources as well. The

Senate gave him permission to levy troops from Rome's overseas allies, which he attempted to do. It appears that he had no trouble enlisting the support of Rome's local allies, as was customary, but when the consul requested aid from the kingdom of Bithynia in Asia Minor, its king, Nicomedes, inflexibly declined. He claimed that many of his able-bodied subjects had been unjustly enslaved by Rome's heavy-handed tax collectors. While the Senate worked to reverse these transgressions, Marius received no manpower from Bithynia and was forced to make do with Rome's local resources.²

Ever since the Jugurthine War concluded, Marius' deputy, Sulla, had been the general's bane. He continued to publicly boast about his role in ending the war while downgrading Marius' contributions. This surely annoyed Marius and may have even offended the jealous general, who mostly loathed sharing honours and credit, but Sulla was a dependable and experienced officer. Marius needed bold and brilliant deputies to vanquish the Cimbri. Consequently, the two-time consul temporarily put aside his pride and appointed Sulla as one of his lieutenants. In time, Sulla was elected to the military tribuneship and continued to admirably serve under the general.³

When Marius believed that he had amassed an army and a corps of officers capable of challenging the barbarians, he departed from Rome towards the northern edges of the Republic's sphere of influence, but he privately questioned the resolve of Rome's tribal partners. He grasped the gravity of the looming war, and as a result, he wanted to reliably gauge the loyalty of Rome's allies in the region. So, he had messages delivered to them, but inside the communication was a second letter, which was sealed. The first notice instructed the readers not to open the second message under any circumstances until a given date. However, before the specified day arrived, Marius cleverly ordered the allies to return the missives to him. When they were delivered, Marius observed that all of the seals were broken, and the letters had presumably been read against his orders. Rome's purported allies had violated his explicit directive, which shook his trust in them. He realized that he likely could not consistently rely upon them and should use extreme caution when coordinating with the allied tribes.⁴

Because of the fickleness of Rome's allies and his troops' inexperience, the consul was in no hurry to engage the barbarians, and fortunately for Marius, he received welcome intelligence.⁵ Instead of marching through the Alps and into the Italian peninsula, the Cimbri inexplicably turned west into Spain. This provided Marius and

Rome with some necessary breathing room and much-needed time to train the Republic's raw recruits. The Cimbri's odd decision also allowed Marius to scout potential battle sites in case they decided to return and harass Rome.⁶

Marius seized the opportunity and drilled his soldiers relentlessly to prepare them for a war that could determine Rome's fate, instilling the strict discipline for which he became notorious. He understood that every day that they trained, they became a more able and dependable force. As a result, he required the legionaries to undergo extended marches to build their endurance and strength, but one of his more unpopular reforms made these treks even more laborious.⁷ Most Republican armies were accompanied by a host of pack animals that transported much of the army's goods. The animals lightened the soldiers' loads but hindered their campaigns.⁸ To address this handicap, Marius required his soldiers to carry their own rations and cooking utensils, rather than relying on beasts of burden. Subsequently, the troops' supplies were bound and hung from a two-pronged pole that extended from their bundles, which freed them from the use of many cumbersome pack animals. However, this meant that the legionaries' long marches were even more arduous because of the added weight. Since his soldiers replaced many of the beasts of burden, they were nicknamed *muli Mariani*, or Marius' mules.⁹ The added labours had the added positive effect of creating a physically fit and nimble force capable of rapid deployments. Eventually, the consul's army became noticeably hardy because of the rigours of Marius' drills and requirements, but the commander laudably led by example. He required his men to be self-sufficient and in extraordinary physical shape, but it was widely known, even during the army's peak fitness, that Marius was unequalled in physical conditioning and bravery.¹⁰

With the soldiers finally in fighting form, they needed battle experience before facing the intimidating barbarians. The Cimbri and their allies' movements and victories had destabilized parts of Gaul, especially in the Alpine regions. Marius' legions presumably returned these territories to Rome's sphere of influence through diplomacy, skirmishes and other small-scale conflicts, but if this indeed occurred during this period, then it provided Marius' raw recruits with valuable combat experience. Even though subduing small tribes was hardly comparable to participating in terrifying set-piece battles with the Cimbri, it certainly had the effect of preparing the legionaries for the

sounds, sights and confusion prevalent in ancient battles.¹¹

During the ongoing training, Marius also implemented a seemingly minor but lasting change in Rome's armies. Before 104 BC, Roman legions carried different standards, which were essentially poles with identifying names and emblems affixed to them. On these standards was a figure of a single animal, either an eagle, horse, wolf, boar or ox. The standards helped identify the legions, provided a rallying point and aided in communication, but they were also a source of great pride. Losing a standard to the enemy caused great shame and humiliation. By Marius' second consulship, he abolished the use of the horse, wolf, boar and ox in his legions, and the eagle remained as the only accepted animal to adorn the legionary standards. The reason for this reform is unknown, but in time, it was embraced and continued well into the Imperial period.¹²

With Marius' legionaries carrying a singular standard, continuing their drilling and gaining battle experience, they were gradually whipped into fighting shape, and over time, they increasingly respected their general. While he was an unforgiving disciplinarian who was molding his army into an obedient and able force, he was also lauded for his leadership as well as his equitable and judicious judgments regarding his soldiers' infractions. His sister's son, Gaius Lusius, was an officer under his command. He was a respectable person for the most part, but his fatal flaw was his love of young men.¹³ Sexuality in ancient Rome was much different from in the modern era. Homosexual relationships were mostly acceptable, and many Romans participated in them to some degree during their lifetimes. Sexuality in the Republican era wasn't an exclusive dichotomy, as some modern contemporaries view it. It was more of a spectrum of varying degrees of preference and experience. For the nobility, it was mostly admissible to engage in these behaviours, so long as the person in question was the active rather than the passive participant during copulation with someone of a lower class. Romans could even be considered macho while being predominantly homosexual. Later in the Imperial period, Emperor Trajan was a celebrated military commander and Emperor Hadrian was an avid hunter. Both men were married to women, but they were predominantly, if not exclusively, homosexual.¹⁴ Even Marius' deputy, Sulla, carried on a relationship with a male actor for much of his life in addition to being married numerous times to different women. Their same-sex relationships simply didn't harm their reputations.

However, there is no evidence to suggest Marius engaged in such activities, even though it would have been acceptable.¹⁵

Nonetheless, Marius' nephew, Lusius, was attracted to one of his subordinates, a young man named Trebonius. On numerous occasions, Lusius attempted to seduce him, and he may have even attempted to pay him for sexual favours. Repeatedly, Trebonius emphatically rejected Lusius' attempts to bed him. Consequently, Lusius became frustrated by Trebonius' rebuffs, and in one more effort, he formally requested Trebonius' presence in his personal tent. Trebonius was Lusius' subordinate, and he could not refuse an official summons. Therefore, the young man obediently entered Lusius' tent, only to be confronted by his superior's violent sexual advances. Faced with a vicious rape or possibly death, Trebonius drew his *gladius* and ran Lusius through, leaving his commanding officer dead on the ground.

Marius was not present in the camp when this event occurred. He may have been surveying possible battle sites or leading legionary detachments in smaller operations. Nevertheless, when he returned, he was confronted with the unpleasant scandal. His relative, who was an officer, was slain by a young legionary. Gossip surely spread rapidly through the army's ranks, and they likely prepared for Marius' vengeance. However, instead of doling out a draconian punishment without a formal judgment, Marius organized a trial to determine Trebonius' verdict and potential penalty. There were no shortage of Romans accusing Trebonius of murdering his commanding officer, and his outlook must have appeared hopelessly bleak. Regardless of outward appearances, Trebonius was determined to vindicate himself. He chose to testify before the assembled legionaries to present his case, and he surely admitted to killing his superior but justified his actions as a matter of honourable self-defence. He also produced a host of witnesses who attested that Lusius had attempted to seduce him on numerous occasions.

Marius listened intently to Trebonius' impassioned statements and the witnesses' testimonies. When the general heard what had truly transpired, he greatly admired the accused. In Marius' point of view, he had refused Lusius' advances, which was his right, and defended himself against his commander's malicious violence. Considering that Lusius was Marius' relative and probably a senior officer, it took impressive fortitude to stand up to him and strike him down when Trebonius had no recourse. If he were convicted of murdering his superior, then he could have expected to pay for the crime with his

life, but Marius believed that Trebonius had acted justly and courageously in the face of impending danger. Instead of punishing the soldier who slew his relative, Marius viewed Trebonius' actions as noble, and he was therefore acquitted of any wrongdoing. Furthermore, Marius awarded the legionary a prestigious military honour, a crown granted to Romans who exhibited great bravery. The general explained to the soldiery that in a period when Rome needed models of gallantry and excellence, Trebonius exuded such desirable traits. Because of this episode, Marius earned a reputation for fairness and a disinclination towards nepotism, and he garnered additional respect from his troops.¹⁶

At some point, while Marius continued preparing for the impending clash with the tribesmen, the Cimbri were ejected from Spain. The Celtiberians defeated them and forced them to withdraw from their territory but not before the Cimbri ravaged the countryside.¹⁷ It may have been at this juncture that the Cimbri rejoined their other tribal allies and may have even formed new alliances, but it is quite possible that some of their partners accompanied them into Spain. It isn't clear whether the Cimbri were intent on marching towards Rome immediately after being expelled from Spain, but some Romans evidently expected them to arrive near the Republic's territory by the spring of 103 BC. This may have been a fabricated rumour spread by Marius' partisan associates to instill enough fear to persuade the Romans to re-elect him to the consulship *in absentia*. However, it is certainly possible that legitimate intelligence reports led the Romans to believe that the Cimbri were headed directly for them. Nevertheless, late in 104 BC, word reached Marius that he had once again been reconfirmed as one of Rome's consuls, illegally and unnecessarily. Supposedly, the Romans refused to entrust their safety to any general but him. He was re-installed as consul, in large part because of the barbarian threat, but his handling of the Trebonius affair was also relayed to Rome, where the electorate appreciated his judiciousness. His consular colleague for 103 BC was Lucius Aurelius Orestes, but little is known about him other than that he eventually died in office.¹⁸

As consul, Marius partnered with an influential *populares* tribune named Lucius Appuleius Saturninus to advance his domestic consular agenda of 103 BC. Marius had apparently promised to reward his poorest Jugurthine War veterans with free farmland, and considering that they hailed from the landless classes, being granted tracts of land

was incredibly significant. He may have extended this generous offer to motivate and entice potential recruits from the underclasses to join his army, to keep them motivated and loyal while on campaign and/or to make it easier to levy soldiers in the future. However, the state was under no obligation to provide free land to former legionaries, nor were they required to honour Marius' charitable declaration. Regardless, the general wished to faithfully keep his word and solidify the veterans' support. To achieve this novel goal, Marius solicited Saturninus' aid, but the populist tribune may have expected something in return from Marius. What their alliance entailed is mostly unknown, but Saturninus likely anticipated wide support from Marius' veterans if he facilitated the passage of the agrarian legislation. It is possible that this was his only incentive, but that seems unlikely.¹⁹ Marius may have also promised to support Saturninus' future elections. Nevertheless, Saturninus assisted Marius and formed a partnership that lasted beyond 103 BC.²⁰

Through some difficulty and political violence, the agrarian measure was debated in Rome, but one of Saturninus' fellow tribunes attempted to veto the legislation. His motives aren't known, but it is certainly possible that he was one of Marius' numerous political enemies. He may have also thought that it wasn't the role of the state to redistribute land for certain population segments at the expense of others, or he could have opposed the measure because of the costs and risks involved if this became an ongoing policy. Nonetheless, Saturninus and his supporters shamefully pelted the man with stones and drove him from the speaker's rostra. As he withdrew and his faction's organized opposition dissipated, the bill passed into law. It guaranteed each of Marius' designated demobilized veterans 100 *jugera*, which was a little more than sixty acres, of land in Africa.²¹ While this was a highly contentious piece of legislation, it certainly was not the first such measure in Rome's history. In 133 BC, Tiberius Gracchus passed a major resettlement package which aimed to provide free land for Rome's poor, and earlier in the Republic's history, following the Second Punic War, the legendary Scipio Africanus handsomely awarded many of his veterans land grants. Marius followed Scipio Africanus' example and extended a precedent in Rome that existed well into the Imperial period.²²

At some point in 103 BC, during Marius' third consulship, the general adopted an unconventional habit. Romans, like people today, wore jewellery, but rings were predominantly composed of iron. Gold

rings simply weren't regularly worn. The state bestowed them upon ambassadors who were embarking on diplomatic missions to advertize their prominence to foreigners, but they weren't intended to be worn in private or during non-official business. Marius decided to ignore the social norm, and he began routinely donning a golden ring, which was an interesting choice for a man who supposedly embraced austere living. Apparently, the remnants of his rustic façade were eroding. The motivation for Marius' deviation from Rome's accepted fashion isn't known, but the general was certainly a very wealthy man by this point of his life. He had been enriched by three consulships, a lifetime of politics, a successful war in Numidia and because of his numerous investments and business contacts that spanned the Republic. It is rather doubtful that Marius wore the gaudy band because he was a trendsetting fashionista. Instead, it seems that he wished to vainly flaunt his wealth and power, and he probably enjoyed the attention too, which was a marked change in his disposition or at least his public persona. Unfortunately, his character continued to outwardly evolve even after this time.²³

Meanwhile, Marius' troops presumably continued their strength training and subjugation of local belligerent tribes, and they were put to work on various projects to keep them occupied. Throughout much of this period, Sulla once again proved his invaluable worth, both militarily and diplomatically. He busied himself by capturing a quarrelsome Gallic tribe's leader named Copillus. He was the Tectosages' chieftain, and by this act alone, the Tectosages were surely neutralized. Sulla additionally used his sharp wit, affability and charm to win an alliance with the Germanic Marsi tribe.²⁴ Still, neither the Cimbri nor their allies neared Rome's sphere of influence. This must have caused many to question whether the barbarians would ever return and whether Marius should be reinstalled as consul or not. It is abundantly apparent that Marius had no desire to cede his unprecedented position of power or his extended military command. However, during his third consular term, his co-consul, Orestes, died, but as the year grew to a close and the political campaign season approached, a consul was required to preside over Rome's elections. Because of this constitutional mandate, Marius was obliged to return to Rome, and as he dutifully travelled to the capital to oversee the balloting, he left one of his deputies, Manius Aquillius, in charge of the legions.

Upon Marius' arrival in Rome, he diverted his focus to domestic

politics. He was constitutionally required to preside over the coming elections, but he also plotted to secure his own re-election. Marius knew all too well how to manipulate the office of the tribunate to his benefit. He was once a tribune, and he had successfully worked with tribunes to accomplish his goals in the past. At this time, Marius reformed his alliance with the tribune Saturninus through flattery and likely other unknown means. When election day neared, many prominent Romans declared their candidacy for the state's highest office. Marius claimed that he didn't desire a fourth consulship and that he was pleased to allow other Romans to attain the office. This, of course, was a feint.

In response to Marius' alleged decision to allow others to seek the consulship, Saturninus publicly feigned anger and disgust. In a piece of poorly directed political theatre, the tribune vigorously stoked discontentment among the Romans over Marius' apparent choice. He exclaimed that if Rome's most able general, Marius, would desert Rome in this ominous period, then he should be considered a traitor to the state. Saturninus asserted that he must stand for re-election and lead Rome's troops against the barbarians whenever they decided to return. The tribune implored the Romans to cast their votes for Marius and to urge the general to agree to serve as consul yet again.

It seems that many Romans easily saw through the ruse, but Saturninus played his role well enough to secure Marius' fourth consulship in blatant disregard of the constitution. Marius accepted the office, but must have acted as though he assumed the consulship with great hesitancy and only because the Romans demanded it. Even though Marius was reappointed to the post, this episode seems to illustrate that Marius' support was waning to some extent after the Cimbri had failed to reappear, and the general clearly needed help to ensure his re-election. Nevertheless, Marius entered 102 BC as consul alongside Lucius Lutatius Catulus. Marius' co-consul was a noble plebeian who wasn't considered an energetic leader, but he was well liked by the aristocracy and sufficiently received by the commoners to be elected.²⁵

Perhaps around this time, Marius and Sulla's petty differences came to a head. The relationship between the two was strained ever since the conclusion of the Jugurthine War, but they had put aside their differences to achieve their common goal of defending the Republic. However, as the protracted Cimbric deployment played out, Sulla grew increasingly weary of the consul. He believed that the general

was jealous of his successes in the Jugurthine War and his achievements in the ongoing Cimbric ‘cold war’. Sulla felt as though Marius had deliberately and repeatedly passed him over for worthy opportunities, which might have furthered his political ambitions. Sulla concluded that Marius was resentful and envious, and he was purposefully attempting to stunt his career. Therefore, at an unknown date, he requested to be transferred to Catulus’ command, and Marius readily approved his petition. The general was likely pleased to be relieved of such a nuisance, but he was also losing a very talented officer.²⁶

Following the fresh elections with the familiar outcome of another consular assignment for Marius, urgent reports reached the general, informing him that the hulking barbarian alliance was lumbering towards Rome’s interests. The commander returned post-haste to his army, and they rushed across the Alps to fortify a defensible position to guard the north-westerly approach to Rome, which was one of the tribesmen’s likeliest routes into the Italian peninsula. Marius picked a site on the Rhone River, where he constructed a fort and awaited the enemy’s arrival. Another source places his stronghold specifically near the intersection of the Rhone and Isère rivers, not far from the plains of modern-day Valence in France. Regardless of the precise location, to ensure that want of provisions didn’t force his army to engage the enemy under unfavourable circumstances, Marius accumulated an impressive store of necessities. He hoped that with the abundance of foodstuffs, his army could survive a protracted siege and engage the enemy on his terms.²⁷

To keep his army perpetually furnished with ample supplies, Marius also needed to secure uninterrupted supply lines, but because of the camp’s location, provisioning Marius’ army over land was expensive and time-consuming. Supplying it by sea was much more efficient, but the Rhone River wasn’t always conducive to large shipping vessels. Due to an accumulation of mud, the mouth of the Rhone was frequently too shallow for ships to easily enter. Marius had a creative answer for this, and he put his ‘mules’ to work. The general ordered his troops to dig deep trenches, which redirected a portion of the Rhone River into a deeper bay that was more suitable for larger vessels. The canals that he created provided dependable shipping routes for his fort. This would be an impressive feat in the modern era, and it was even more extraordinary considering that it was accomplished on the backs of Romans who were equipped with only

ancient tools. The canal that they painstakingly laboured to establish was efficacious and apparently long-lasting. It still existed many years later and even bore Marius' name.²⁸

While Marius held the westerly route to Rome and was transforming Gaul's landscape, his co-consul, Catulus, along with Sulla, was dispatched to hold the north-easterly Alpine passage into Italy. The Romans were well aware that the barbarians were en route to their homeland, but they weren't entirely sure of their strategy or which passage that they might take. However, as the barbarians proceeded, Roman scouts must have reported on their troop movements, giving Marius a rough idea of their plans, but he also had other methods of keeping watch on them.²⁹ One of Marius' officers was a Roman survivor of the carnage at Arausio named Sertorius. Marius allegedly instructed him to assume the identity and dress of a barbarian to permit him to infiltrate the tribesmen's camps and collect intelligence, and he courageously complied. If this hazardous operation actually occurred, then the consul likely had some broad insight into the barbarians' plans, but it likely wasn't enough to guarantee victory.³⁰ To counterbalance the relative lack of intelligence, Marius sagaciously decided that he and Catulus should guard the two most likely routes that the tribesmen might take to enter Rome's domain, and Marius assumed the most direct path. He might have been unsure of the Cimbri and their allies' schemes, but his preparation and strategy was solid. The tribal allies split their forces into two, possibly three columns, but there is considerable disagreement over the tribes' movements, their individual roles and how many tribes were even involved. It appears that the Teutones, Ambrones and perhaps a small Cimbric contingent combined and marched into Liguria, which comprised much of the coastal region near the border of modern-day Italy and France, but Marius guarded the route that they chose. Meanwhile, the bulk of the Cimbri advanced toward Noricum and intended entering Rome's territory via one of the passages defended by Catulus.³¹ The Tigurini may have travelled with the Cimbri. However, it appears that they remained north of the Alps as a reserve force, but there is some disagreement as to the Tigurini's role in the affair. Nevertheless, the Cimbri had collided with Rome in the past, possibly by accident, but they had never invaded the Roman homeland. This time was different. There was no doubt that the barbarians were deliberately headed directly for Rome, intent on invading their territory, defeating them militarily and settling permanently on their land.³²

For an unknown reason, the Cimbri delayed their trek towards Noricum, but the Teutones and Ambrones departed without hesitation. Before long, they arrived outside Marius' Rhone River fortification in a terrifying spectacle. The tribesmen's awe-inspiring numbers carpeted the plain beyond Marius' position. Combined, the two tribes may have fielded an army that numbered more than 200,000 warriors. Their soldiers greatly outnumbered the Roman legionaries, who probably totalled no more than 32,000. The general and his troops were safely inside their fortified encampment, but the barbarians invited the Romans to give battle. Marius guarded a strongly defended location and wasn't willing to abandon a position of strength for one of weakness. He wisely scoffed at the tribesmen's challenge, even though some of his own troops loudly agitated to fight the horde. Marius admonished these men without hesitation. He likened anyone who would insubordinately ignore his command and needlessly meet the enemy as traitors. Marius' plan was to patiently wait for the right moment to attack, and not a second before.³³

According to one report, either at this juncture or during a subsequent meeting, a Teuton doggedly badgered the Romans and issued challenges directly to Marius. The barbarian invited the general to join him in single combat. What this was supposed to accomplish isn't clear. In the ancient world, there were examples of battles that were settled by a contest between the two most able warriors, but the Teuton's aims are ambiguous. Regardless of what the barbarian hoped to accomplish, the Romans weren't well-known for participating in such duels. It simply wasn't their *modus operandi* during this era. Nonetheless, these contests were generally between warriors. They didn't often pit elder commanders against lowly foot soldiers. Marius was a respected statesman and a general. He wasn't a common brawler. He likely thought that if he accepted this challenge, then it would debase his character because it was beneath his stature as a consul and a commander, and regardless of who won, the fight would accomplish nothing. He understandably rejected the Teuton's pointless invitation, but Marius mockingly advised him that if he so desired death, then he should find a rope, fashion a noose and hang himself. Marius' response didn't satisfy the combative barbarian, who continued demanding a confrontation. Finally, Marius informed the tribesman that if he desired a fight, then he would grant his wish. Marius produced a veteran gladiator, and he explained to the barbarian that he must first spar with him. If he still lusted for blood after slaying the trained fighter, then he would accept the Teuton's

invitation. Apparently, the barbarian quietly withdrew his requests and there was no contest.³⁴

Rumours of the barbarians' terrible features abounded, and tales of their military exploits were well-known. The consul knew this, but while the Teutones and Ambrones were encamped outside his fort, he sensed an opportunity. He shrewdly refused to agree to meet the innumerable enemy in battle until it was absolutely necessary and the circumstances were favourable. In the meantime, he rotated the soldiers on watch so that the legionaries could safely witness the barbarians' peculiar traits, habits and weapons. Marius hoped that after these observations, his soldiers would no longer be frightened by their battle cries or awe-struck by their stature, but it also permitted them to learn more about their foreign weaponry and possibly their tactics. The plan seemed to work, as the Romans learned what to expect from the tribesmen in battle and became less afraid of them.³⁵

While they intently studied the enemy, the Romans heard the barbarians' offensive threats and insults, and they also witnessed the tribesmen's indiscriminant destruction of the countryside. This infuriated the proud legionaries, who had watched the Teutones and Ambrones long enough that they no longer recoiled in dread before the barbarians. Marius' troops were eager for action, and one of the frustrated soldiers complained:

*'What cowardice, pray, has Marius discovered in us that he keeps out of battle like women under lock and key? Come, let us act like freemen and ask him if he is waiting for other soldiers to fight in defence of Italy, and will use us as workmen all the time, whenever there is need of digging ditches and clearing out mud and diverting a river or two. For it was to this end, as it would seem, that he exercised us in those many toils, and these are the achievements of his consulships which he will exhibit to his fellow-citizens on his return to Rome. Or does he fear the fate of Carbo and Caepio, whom the enemy defeated? But they were far behind Marius in reputation and excellence, and led an army that was far inferior to his. Surely it is better to do something, even if we perish as they did, rather than to sit here and enjoy the spectacle of our allies being plundered.'*³⁶

A large portion of the soldiery was weary from hiding behind their fortifications and enduring the tribesmen's offences. It pleased Marius to learn that they were stoked with bravery but also humiliated by not being able to engage the enemy. In the general's point of view, his troops no longer cowered in fear before the barbarians. In fact, they were eager to slay them. However, Marius would have been a poor

general indeed if he allowed his relatively untested legionaries to believe that he viewed them as cowards. He allayed their concerns and carefully explained that he did not question their valour, but he was waiting for a favourable sign from the gods before he was willing to risk battle. In all likelihood, it was probably a combination of factors. Marius was a religious man, in the Roman sense of the word, but he was also a seasoned general. First, he was waiting for the Teutones and Ambrones to commit a grievous mistake to give his legions a decisive edge. Secondly, before he was willing to embark on a battle, he wanted the gods to bless his strategy. Marius' explanation was partially true, but according to Roman religion, even if the omens were deemed favourable, victory wasn't necessarily assured. It simply meant that the gods weren't offended, and they viewed the battle plan as sound.

Marius respected the gods and of course his own military ability, but he acquired a secret weapon by way of his wife, Julia. Sometime earlier, a Syrian clairvoyant named Martha wished to share a number of prophecies with the Republic's leaders. As a result, she requested that the Roman Senate permit her to speak to the assembled men, but they were sceptical and denied her solicitation. After being shunned by Rome's leading men, the self-professed psychic arranged a meeting with some influential Roman women, including Marius' wife, and Martha ostensibly demonstrated her gift of foresight in various ways. At a gladiatorial bout, Martha sat at Julia's feet and accurately predicted which gladiators would be victorious. Julia was thoroughly impressed by her skill and realized how beneficial she could be to her husband. Thereupon she was delivered to the general, who was likewise astonished by her psychic skill. She quickly became a valued member of his retinue. On campaign, she was carried about on a litter, a platform that individuals laid on while being carried by slaves or servants, and she counselled the general based on her premonitions. During sacrifices, she accompanied the consul and dressed in purple robes, and she was armed with a spear. Marius' soldiers were understandably confused by the spectacle, and some even presumed that the general didn't really believe in her power. They claimed that he was merely acting out some sort of ruse with her, perhaps as propaganda to allay the legionaries' concerns. Nonetheless, as far as many of Marius' other soldiers knew, he relied on his own military instincts, considered omens from the gods and employed Martha's talents before he was willing to chance battle with the barbarians.

If Marius was seeking other supernatural signs, then he wasn't disappointed. Two cities in Umbria, a region in central Italy, reported a magnificent sight in the night sky. The citizens announced that fiery spears and shields violently clashed in the heavens and manoeuvred like soldiers in battle. As the celestial fighting proceeded, one of the sides began to falter and the victorious force tracked it into the west until the display disappeared altogether. For the Romans, this clearly signified that they would defeat the barbarians. Another omen was also witnessed. A metaphysical sign was received by Bataces, who was allegedly a priest in the cult of Cybele, the great mother. He announced that Cybele had personally informed him of the Romans' impending victory over the tribesmen. The Senate accepted the tale as legitimate, but a tribune named Aulus Pompeius believed that the man was a pretender. Therefore, when Bataces described his supernatural experience to the assembled Romans in the forum, Pompeius disrespectfully interrupted the priest's speech. However, immediately following Pompeius' contemptuous treatment of the man, the tribune acquired a fever. He died no later than seven days after the incident, which placed more stock in Bataces' account. To the Romans, it appeared that Pompeius had insulted the goddess Cybele and her priest, and he paid for his malfeasance with his life.

Marius' soldiers also had a method of predicting the result of battles. Earlier in the campaign, they noticed two vultures that seemed to follow the army wherever it went. They accompanied the legions and were present during all of their victories, which must have included relatively minor conflicts with local tribes. Nonetheless, they believed that it was a positive sign when the birds were within sight. A few of the soldiers managed to even capture the two vultures, and they placed bronze rings on the birds so that they could easily recognize them. Afterwards, they released them back into the wild, but whenever they were nearby, the troops felt at ease and assured of a favourable outcome.³⁷

The ancient authors were silent as to whether the vultures were later observed flying over the camp when the Teutones and presumably the Ambrones ultimately chose to attack Marius' fort. The barbarians were stymied by the general's unwillingness to fight on their terms. They must have felt a sense of hopelessness, since they weren't able to coax the Romans out of their fort's safety, but they were also surely concerned that if they departed for Rome while Marius was on the loose, then their rear might be exposed and harried

by his legions. Consequently, they resolved to storm the stronghold and force a battle, but it didn't go as planned. The barbarians fearlessly approached Marius' position and probably planned to scale the barricades and breach the Roman camp. As the offensive began in earnest, wave after wave fiercely attacked the fort, but after three consecutive days, they were unsuccessful. Marius' sturdy defences held strong and the Romans released a barrage of missiles, killing many barbarians and repulsing the rest.³⁸

Frustrated and disheartened, the tribesman determined that their best course of action was to ignore Marius' fort, cross the Alps and proceed to their destination, somewhere in Roman territory. The Teutones and Ambrones must have realized that Marius couldn't passively allow an enemy army to invade his homeland unmolested, although Plutarch claims that this was their hope. However, it is hardly believable that the tribal allies could have been naïve enough to expect such an irrational response from a seasoned general like Marius. Since they had failed to defeat Marius on his terms, they hoped that by advancing towards Rome they could lure him from the safety of his fort, force him to confront their horde and defeat him on more equitable conditions.³⁹

Annoyed by their inability to incite a battle with Marius, the Teutones and Ambrones loaded their provisions and marched past the Roman camp, but the barbarians approached the Romans close enough to communicate with the attentive soldiers. They tauntingly asked the legionaries if they had any messages that they would like delivered to their wives, because, they claimed, 'We shall soon be with them.' Even this infuriating barb wasn't enough to draw the Romans out of their camp and into a perilous engagement. Marius had instituted strict discipline in the ranks, but despite their training, the view of the barbarians departing was disconcerting. The Romans were familiar with the tribesmen's magnitude, but if they were under any delusions regarding the enemy's scope, then they were treated to an alarming and unwelcome spectacle. The barbarians continuously shuffled past Marius' fort in an incredibly long procession. If the ancient sources are to be believed, it took six days for the entire barbarian multitude to clear the encampment. Regardless of their strength of numbers, when they were finally beyond the Romans' position, Marius decamped and shadowed the horde, seeking a favourable opportunity for the inevitable showdown.⁴⁰

XI

AQUAE SEXTIAE

'Coming upon the Teutones first at the very foot of the Alps, what a defeat he inflicted upon them, ye heavenly powers, at the place called Aquae Sextiae!'

– *Lucius Annaeus Florus*

The Teutones and Ambrones slowly proceeded from Marius' Rhone River fortification towards the Alps, but the Romans trailed the horde continuously. It probably wasn't too difficult to shadow the barbarian multitude because it was comprised of more than just seasoned warriors. There were many women, children and elderly Teutons and Ambronians who were part of the tribal cavalcade, which considerably delayed their advance. Marius' legionaries, on the other hand, were well trained, disciplined and conditioned to carry their own necessities and quickly traverse long distances. This afforded them the ability to outstrip and possibly outmanoeuvre the barbarians if necessary.¹ Moreover, the years spent waiting for the Cimbric alliance to arrive permitted the Romans to presumably discover speedier routes and locate ideal battle sites. This provided Marius with excellent advantages that he hoped would counter the tribesmen's immense numbers.²

The barbarians continued towards their ultimate destination, but they were fully aware that Marius and his legionaries were assiduously stalking them. The general made no efforts to conceal his location or the fact that he was pursuing the tribesmen. Nonetheless, as the Teutones and Ambrones progressed, they established camps intermittently to grant their countrymen respite. When they temporarily suspended their marches, Marius ordered his troops to ready camps near the enemy's positions, which must have unnerved the barbarians. At each stop, the consul ordered his troops to quickly construct fortifications capable of protecting the legionaries for the night and staving off any potential offensives.

Marius' tactics continued to stymie the barbarians. He initially refused to fight them on equal terms outside his Rhone River fort. Then he trailed the marching tribes and camped alongside them, but he ordered his men to build impressive fortifications able to withstand a military charge. The Teutones and Ambrones were unable to force a

battle of their choosing, and they failed to shake Marius' swift and tenacious force from their trail. However, with each passing day, they drew closer to Rome and knew that Marius would eventually be forced to act to prevent them from pouring into his homeland.³

Marius was biding his time and waiting for the barbarians to commit a costly error that he planned to exploit, but as they drew nearer to the Alps, the final gateway into Roman territory, he knew that the time for action was quickly dwindling. Fortunately for Marius, he was presented with a chance to confront the tribes as they halted their advance and decided to spend the night near Aquae Sextiae, which was located in south-eastern France, not far from modern-day Marseille. As was the norm, Marius established a nearby encampment. This time it was on an adjacent hill that was closest to the Ambrones, but there was a severe drawback to the location – the Roman position was without a water source. The nearby Ambrones, however, had access to a river and the local springs. This may or may not have been part of Marius' design. It might have been an embarrassing oversight on behalf of Marius' engineers or part of his grand plan. He knew the area well enough and must have meticulously scouted the most advantageous campsites, but to assume a position without water seems like an unnecessarily risky move. He may have been forced to choose a less than desirable location based on the enemy's unpredictable movements, or as some ancient writers asserted, this could have been all part of Marius' strategy to motivate his men to charge the Ambrones.⁴

When the legionaries ceased marching, their general once again ordered them to make camp and erect ramparts to shelter them from the enemy for the night. However, scores of parched soldiers loudly complained about the lack of water, but Marius stoically pointed to the Ambronian bivouac and responded that if it was water that they desired, then they could retrieve it from the enemy by force.⁵ He even taunted them, saying, 'If you are men, there it is yonder for you.' The barb had the desired effect of inspiring his legionaries to beg for battle.⁶ One curious legionary questioned the consul, asking, 'Why, then dost thou not lead us at once against the enemy, while our blood is still moist?' Marius appreciated the reasonable query and his soldier's eagerness, but the methodical and thorough general replied, 'We must first make our camp strong.' So, the soldiers accordingly busied themselves with the camp's fortifications.⁷

Many of the Roman legionaries' servants travelled with the army.

They assisted their masters during the campaign in various ways, but they apparently either didn't hear Marius' order to ready the camp before seeking water or simply didn't care. Regardless of whether they were willfully disobedient or merely ignorant, a group of them decided to fetch water from near the Ambrones' camp, which may have only housed around 30,000 barbarians and was separated from the Teutones' bivouac. Some of the servants armed themselves in case they were detected during their perilous and unauthorized mission, and as they crept closer to the river, some very surprised barbarians spotted them. The tribesmen were preoccupied with their normal routines and weren't expecting to run across any Romans. In fact, it appears that the Ambrones had unwisely camped on both sides of the river, which split their forces in two. Many Ambronians were bathing in the hot springs, while others were eating dinner and drinking wine. When they noticed the Roman servants approaching, they frantically called for help and alerted their countrymen. Drunk, weighed down by food and half naked, the Ambrones quickly mobilized to prepare for battle.⁸

The Roman soldiers heard the commotion and quickly grasped the situation. First, Marius' Ligurian auxiliaries dropped their tools and sprinted downhill to defend their imperilled servants, and then the Roman regulars followed. Slightly disoriented, the barbarians formed lines and awaited the Romans' arrival. To strike fear into their enemy and embolden their comrades, the tribesmen beat their shields with their swords and screamed their tribal name, 'Ambrones!'. The first detachment to near the barbarians were the Ligurians, and coincidentally in their early history, their tribe was once also called the Ambrones. When the Ligurians witnessed the barbarians howling their ancient tribal name, they responded in turn by fiercely shouting 'Ambrones!' as well. The Ligurians and Ambrones continued the shouting match, with each side attempting to outdo the other, until fighting finally erupted. It doesn't seem that the Ligurians' attack was wellformulated, but this may have been part of the strategy. Nonetheless, the Roman auxiliaries and the Ambrones clashed in close combat, but not far behind, the Romans had formed proper lines and rushed to their defence.⁹

The Romans reinforced the Ligurians, launched a barrage of javelins, unsheathed their short swords and collided with the tribesmen with vigour. After the legionaries smashed into the Ambrones, the battle quickly turned into a rout. Marius' soldiers easily

overpowered them as they continued to press the barbarians backward towards the river. As the Romans unmistakably gained the upper hand, the tribesmen were slaughtered in and near the waterway, which polluted the river with blood, gore and fresh corpses. Others were slain while retreating, but it is probable that a number of barbarians fearfully crossed the river and safely united with the Teutones.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the dehydrated legionaries finally acquired a water source, but even though it was highly contaminated, they heedlessly imbibed the fluids and drank as much blood as they did water without demur.¹¹

The battle, however, had still not concluded. The tribesmen had actually left much behind. As the Romans swept through the Ambrones' camp, they located their baggage train and encountered the ferocious barbarian women. Some seized whatever weapons they could find, including swords and battleaxes, and they fought fiercely against the Romans, who weren't accustomed to warrior women. As they defended their camp's remnants, they received and inflicted damaging injuries, but in the end, they were no match for the disciplined legionaries. Slowly, the last of the Ambrones perished in the battle, were captured or managed to scamper away. As the confrontation drew to a close, the victorious Romans viewed a battlefield that was littered with thousands of bodies.¹²

The ancient accounts of the battle are certainly questionable, and many of the earliest sources that chronicled segments of Marius' life were written by the general's eventual foes, which likely compromises the record's veracity. The narrative of the engagement suggests that the battle was an accident. The early Roman writers contended that many of Marius' men, filled with rage, ignored the general's orders and dashed in partial disorder towards the enemy, but somehow managed to score a resounding victory. This is hardly plausible. Marius' soldiers had been drilled for years, with discipline comprehensively instilled in them. They wouldn't carelessly charge headlong into battle without orders or a viable plan. Furthermore, unplanned and disorganized attacks against formidable foes in the ancient world generally resulted in thorough defeats, not victories. The Ligurians would have been more difficult for Marius to control, since they likely hadn't received the full Marian training and their primary loyalties didn't lie with Marius or Rome. It is possible that they could have reacted impetuously, but the consul probably had a tighter rein on their actions than the ancient authors presented. It also

seems incredibly unlikely that the entire Ligurian auxiliary unit could have mobilized and departed without the general or his staff having the opportunity to abort their plans. The battle most certainly developed differently than the ancient writers reported.

Marius had surely scouted the landscape, gathered intelligence and implemented a deliberate strategy. Considering all of the circumstances, it is highly improbable that this was an unintentional and disorderly battle. It appears that Marius sagely chose to attack when many of the Ambrones were enjoying dinner, intoxicated and/or bathing. Clearly, he was hoping to catch them unprepared. He also decided to launch his assault in a location where the barbarians were cut off from their allies, the Teutones, which prevented them from uniting and facing him with overwhelming numbers. Moreover, Marius exploited a misstep that the tribesmen committed. They encamped on a river in such a manner that it acted as a barrier that split their force in two and impeded their retreat, creating a detrimental situation. Marius also held the high ground, which meant that when his men charged the enemy, the Romans were at a distinct advantage. The battle's details bear the hallmarks of a well-designed and intentional offensive.

It is unimaginable that the servants who were searching for water may have contributed to the battle's onset or outcome. They could have accidentally wandered into the enemy camp, noticed a weak point in its defences or simply realized that the barbarians weren't ready for battle. When they dutifully reported their findings to Marius, he likely included it in his strategy, but considering the circumstances, Marius' planning must have predated this incident. However, it is possible that their decision to seek water hastened Marius to implement his pre-planned strategy before he had originally intended. Nonetheless, Marius used the landscape to his benefit, waited until the Ambrones were separated from their allies and sounded the charge in an attempt to catch them unawares. The Ligurians may have been the first to engage the enemy, but this likely wasn't an accident either. They were probably skirmishers or cavalry dispatched to strike quickly to either draw the enemy out, cause confusion, contain a portion of the barbarians and/or exploit a weakness in their defences. After the Ligurians accomplished their goal, Marius then ordered his legionaries forward to finish the job.¹³

The fighting probably raged for some time, but by the time that the battle finally concluded, it was too late in the day to finish erecting

the incomplete fortifications, which left the Romans vulnerable to a counter-attack. Frequently in the ancient world, much like modern times, after an army achieved a great victory, the soldiers boisterously celebrated. The Romans, however, did not spend the night drinking or loudly sharing tales of valour. They spent it in quiet fear. The rest of the enemy was nearby and the Romans felt defenceless without their robust ramparts. The barbarians still greatly outnumbered them, and night battles were incredibly risky endeavours which the Romans preferred to avoid. If this didn't stoke enough anxiety in the legionaries, then the tribesmen's terrifying shrieks, groans and threats intermittently echoing in the night caused tremendous unease among the soldiery. These were probably the surviving Ambrones, in mourning due to losing family members and countrymen. Given the state of affairs, Marius was rightfully concerned that at any point during the night, they might return with their allies and force a hazardous night battle with the Romans.¹⁴ Marius prepared as one might expect, but it appears that he also employed a canny strategy either on this night or shortly thereafter. He sent a small detachment of soldiers into the woods to create a great noise to prevent the enemy from resting, so that if they did meet in battle over the course of the next couple of days, then the barbarians would be sluggish due to their sleeplessness.¹⁵ However, the night and the succeeding few days passed without incident, to Marius' great relief.¹⁶

Simply because the Teutones and surviving Ambrones failed to counter-attack the Romans' exposed position wasn't an indication that they weren't planning to retaliate. The Ambrones who successfully fled from the slaughter likely reunited with their allies, the Teutones. Together, they marshalled their impressive forces and prepared for a pitched battle to demolish Marius' army once and for all. Even though the Roman forces had embarrassed the Ambrones, the Teutones must have still felt confident that they could easily win in a set-piece battle, since they held the numerical advantage.¹⁷ Therefore, four days following the Ambrones' defeat, the remaining barbarians lingered on a plain near Aquae Sextiae, where they hoped Marius would give battle. They surely believed that the plain provided conditions not overly favourable to either side, leaving their large numbers as the battle's deciding factor, but they underestimated Marius' cleverness.¹⁸

The plain was large, at an incline and flanked by groves and deep ravines. Marius reconnoitered the site, formulated a plan of attack and decided to give battle, much to the tribesmen's pleasant surprise. They

believed that they held the advantage and were pleased that Marius was willing to engage them. However, Marius astutely realized that because of the plain's natural ditches and copses, the width of the battlefield was limited. The barbarians' numerical superiority was negated to a degree by the natural landscape because it funnelled their lines into a narrower space. Upon this revelation, the consul planned to march his legionaries to the plain and assume the high ground while ordering one of his deputies, Claudius Marcellus, to covertly lead a detachment of 3,000 soldiers away from the battlefield. They were ordered to remain undetected and lay in wait until the determined time when Marcellus would appear at the enemy's rear, leaving the barbarians surrounded. The general also instructed the main force of his legionaries to stand firm against the enemy attack when the battle commenced, simultaneously launch a volley of javelins, draw their *gladii* and guard themselves with their shields. When the enemy approached, he advised his troops to thrust them backward with their shields. Since the barbarians were marching uphill and their footing was unsure, he assured his troops that the tribesmen would be vulnerable.¹⁹

The old general additionally used trickery to psychologically affect the enemy. He ordered the camp's servants, followers and other non-combatants to march with the army. This was intended to create the illusion that Marius' legions were much larger than they actually were. He was outnumbered, but he didn't want the barbarians to realize how much larger they were compared to his force. He also commanded his troops to fashion all of the army's beasts of burden so that they appeared as cavalry horses in order to present an augmented force. These were only meant to be illusions. Clearly, the faux soldiers and cavalry weren't intended to participate in the actual fighting, but they could still influence the outcome. They could intimidate the tribesmen if they believed that the Roman force was much larger than it really was, and by creating these fabricated fighting groups, it could force the barbarians to hold more of their cavalry and infantry in reserve to check Marius' deceptive units.²⁰

After Marius had repeatedly frustrated the Teutones by avoiding military encounters and angered them by slaughtering many of the Ambrones, they were eager to meet Marius on the battlefield. Once it was clear that the consul was planning to confront the barbarians, the Teutones and surviving Ambrones impatiently waited for him to arrive at the battle site. When they finally noticed Marius' cavalry entering

the plain, they impetuously charged uphill and expended valuable energy climbing the inclined plain. As they reached the Romans, the legionaries responded precisely as Marius had instructed them. They unleashed what must have been a devastating salvo of spears upon the charging enemy, which killed or maimed an unknown number. Following the volley, the legionaries stood in close order, drew their short swords and tightened their grips on their shields as they awaited the barbarian arrival at the hilltop. The two armies smashed into one another, but because of the Roman strategy, discipline and strength training, the tribesmen were prevented from breaking through Marius' lines. The Romans then pressed the winded barbarians with their shields and intermittently stabbed them when the opportunity arose.²¹

The fierce battle continued for much of the morning, with neither side gaining a decisive edge.²² However, the well-conditioned and disciplined legionaries slowly and systematically shoved the horde down the hill until the Romans and barbarians were both on level ground, which must have temporarily pleased the tribal generals. To the Teutons and Ambronians, it seemed that the Romans had mistakenly abandoned the high ground that usually served as a strategic benefit, but their delight soon turned to terror. Marius' deputy, Marcellus, arrived as planned at the enemy's exposed rear and loudly attacked the barbarians. Upon realizing that they were being viciously assaulted on two fronts, the Teutones' and Ambrones' soldiers frantically flew into confusion, broke ranks and attempted to flee, but there was no haven to be found for most of the multitude. The Romans tracked them down and mercilessly killed the lot of them. Estimates vary from around 100,000 being slain or captured to 200,000 dying and between 80,000 and 90,000 being apprehended. Unfortunately, the ancient sources vary to a great degree.²³ Nevertheless, only a small fraction escaped with their lives, while nearly an entire people was exterminated. Three thousand Teutons reportedly managed to flee the carnage, possibly including their king, Teutobodus.²⁴ Orosius claimed that Teutobodus fell at Aquae Sextiae, but the other sources disagree. They assert that a cadre of Teuton chieftains, perhaps including Teutobodus, eluded the Romans, only to be captured by an Alpine tribe named the Sequani, who delivered them to Marius. After the consul's resounding victory, it is no wonder that the Sequani surrendered them to him. They certainly wanted to remain in his good graces after Aquae Sextiae.²⁵

Following the battle, many of the surviving barbarian women

informed Marius that they would commit mass suicide unless he gave them certain assurances. They requested that he guarantee that they would not be violated, which was entirely understandable, and they asked to be appointed as priestesses in Rome's cults. They may have specifically petitioned to be assigned to the Vestal Virgins, who served the Roman goddess of the hearth, Vesta. The general firmly refused their demands, for unknown reasons, but there are several possible explanations. Defeated peoples weren't usually permitted to make demands, and they may have been too numerous or unfit to serve with the Vestal Virgins or in Rome's other cults. Furthermore, he may have preferred to sell them as slaves and generate a healthy profit. Nonetheless, after he denied their requests, the females accordingly kept their word. They murdered their children and then killed themselves, either by hanging or the blade.²⁶

Another author presented a different version of the story. The ancient writer St Jerome claimed that under the terms of surrender, 300 married barbarian women were delivered to the Romans. They preferred to serve in the cults of Ceres and Venus, goddesses of agriculture and love respectively. However, upon learning that Marius had disapproved of assigning them to these specific cults, they remorselessly killed their children and consequently strangled one another in the night until supposedly none were left living. This adaptation is suspect. Marius overwhelmingly defeated the tribesmen, and peace terms were unnecessary. It might as well have been an unconditional surrender. It seems that this account is probably a confused version of the original report whereby a multitude of women offered to be Roman priestesses in exchange for their safety and freedom, and when this was denied, they slew themselves.²⁷

After the battle, and possibly the mass suicide, the Romans also seized the tribesmen's property, which was an enormously valuable trove. Some of the soldiers plundered the captured booty, but the bulk of the spoils were given to their general by a vote of the soldiers. They believed that the man who orchestrated the formidable Teutones' and Ambrones' defeat deserved it and much more. Still, there were other means of profiting from war. The surviving barbarians who were apprehended certainly also enriched the soldiers and Marius. Frequently in the ancient world, captured prisoners of war and their families were sold into slavery, lining their captors' pockets considerably, and Aquae Sextiae's survivors likely met the same despicable fate.

After Marius' soldiers picked through the barbarian booty, the commander and his subordinates examined the remaining treasure trove and set aside anything of real value or importance for the general's eventual triumph. The rest was designated for a grand sacrifice to the gods, and the consul ordered a great pyre to be erected so that he could thank the deities for his victory over the barbarians. When the pyre was finally prepared, much of the enemy's property was placed upon the construction. Then the soldiers solemnly gathered around, and Marius appeared in a ceremonial robe with a purple hem and grasped a firebrand to light the massive collection. In dramatic fashion, the general slowly lifted the burning torch over his head before igniting the magnificent offering, but just as he was about to light the sacrificial pile, he noticed a company of horseman galloping towards him in haste.

Marius temporarily postponed the sacrifice to inquire about the unexpected interruption, but the horsemen had welcome news for the general. They proclaimed that while he was away, he had been elected to his fifth consulship. His term was set to begin in 101 BC and his co-consul was Manius Aquillius, who hailed from an ancient and respected aristocratic family and was one of Marius' supporters. The general had been awarded the state's highest post in *absentia* for the third time and enjoyed his fourth consecutive appointment, all completely unconstitutional of course. This could not have been much of a shock for the statesman. He was surely conversing regularly with his contacts in Rome, and his allies must have been advocating for another consulship at his bidding. Nevertheless, between the recent military victories and their general's re-election, his soldiers had cause for celebration, and they reacted exuberantly. Shouts of support burst out from the legionaries' ranks, and they beat their swords and spears against their shields, causing great commotion. To honour Marius, he was crowned with a laurel wreath, and after the clamour eventually dissipated, the newly re-elected consul finally set the sacrificial pyre alight, which was surely a magnificent sight to behold.²⁸

At some point afterwards, perhaps following the eventual triumph, Marius decided to reward his veterans and personally profit at the same time. The consul decided to auction the captured booty to his soldiers at a highly discounted price. The legionaries must have quickly purchased the better part of the plunder and, in turn, enriched themselves. Even though Marius sold the spoils for a token price, he still must have enjoyed hefty proceeds from the numerous

transactions. Nonetheless, the soldiers loved him even more because of it.²⁹

What occurred on the plains of Aquae Sextiae left more behind than the pyre's ashes or mental impressions. Disturbing physical evidence endured for years, which was a constant reminder of the great slaughter. The deaths of so many barbarians affected the countryside and even the local agriculture. The inhabitants of the nearby town of Massalia, modern-day Marseille, industriously made use of the ubiquitous human remains. In a macabre display, they erected fences using the abundant human bones to protect their grape vines. Femurs, tibias, fibulas, humeri, ulnas and radiuses shielded their crops, and the locals yielded remarkable produce. The decaying corpses left the soil enriched, and for years the region experienced extraordinary harvests, largely thanks to the thousands of rotting bodies fertilizing the farmers' lands. The same soldiers who once proudly defended their tribe in life, ingloriously safeguarded crops in death while their flesh was slowly absorbed by produce.³⁰

XII

VERCELLAE

‘There would have been an end of Rome if that age had not had the good fortune to possess Marius.’

– *Lucius Annaeus Florus*

Marius had scored two great victories in succession, but within days of these achievements, he received mostly disconcerting reports regarding his consular colleague of 102 BC, Catulus. He probably commanded an army consisting of no more than 20,000 soldiers, and he wasn't faring well for the most part. He had been dispatched to guard the Alpine passes near Noricum to block the barbarians' possible advance through the region. While he was there, he pacified much of the territory's local barbarian tribes thanks to Sulla's invaluable contributions. Sulla also excelled at supplying Catulus' legions with provisions. In fact, he acquired quantities that were so great that Catulus' soldiers enjoyed excesses and the surpluses were allegedly transferred to Marius' legions.¹ Unfortunately for Rome, that was the extent of the positive reports from Catulus. The mighty Cimbri were planning to enter Rome's realm through one of the north-eastern corridors held by Marius' co-consul, which mustn't have been much of a surprise. However, Catulus' response left a great deal to be desired. He probably received intelligence announcing the Cimbri's imminent arrival, but there were numerous Alpine passes that they might take. He found his task of defending the north-easterly passage to Rome impractical because, to defend multiple entry points, he would be required to divide his soldiers to man each pass, but this would severely weaken his army. As a result, he chose to retreat from his assignment and allow the barbarians to enter Italy while he sought a more defensible position.²

Likely during Catulus' retreat from the Alps, his army became in danger of being cornered by the tribesmen. Catulus paused in order to attempt to score a minor victory in order to extricate his troops from the region. After he led his legionaries onto a mountain, which overlooked the Cimbri, he ordered the vast majority of them to remain ready for battle. He instructed the other soldiers to erect minimal ramparts, raise a handful of tents and build fires as though they were camping for the night. All of this was purposefully performed in the

barbarians' view to influence them to temporarily lower their guard. Once night fell, Catulus' troops attacked the Cimbri, which permitted him and his troops to cross a stream held by the tribesmen and continue their trek southward to safety.³ Catulus' legions marched until they reached the Atiso River (also called the Atesis, but today known as the Adige River).⁴ He hoped to use the waterway and the legionaries' building skills to erect a defensive position and halt the Cimbric advance. Catulus ordered his soldiers to construct fortifications on both sides of the river and a bridge to allow them to traverse from one to the other. Between the aquatic barrier, the ramparts and thousands of legionaries, Catulus must have felt that his chances were reasonably good.⁵

The Cimbri weren't far behind Catulus. They trekked through the Alps with little clothing and used their shields to sled down the precipitous mountains. Once they arrived on the southern end of the Alps, they made camp and investigated the region and Catulus' defences.⁶ After discovering Catulus' river fortifications, the barbarians attempted to cross the waterway at a safe distance from the legionaries' position. They did not, however, try to traverse the waterway by boat or by constructing a bridge, which would have been logical. They mindlessly waded into the river with their supplies, but they found that it was too treacherous to span.⁷ Consequently, they created a makeshift dam using earth, rocks and large trees to stop the river from flowing towards the Romans, and they diverted it elsewhere, which left the legionaries defending an increasingly diminished waterway. The barbarians also placed large objects in the Atiso, which were swept downstream and violently ploughed into Catulus' bridge. The combination of the appearance of hundreds of thousands of Cimbri, attacks on the Roman bridge and the dwindling water levels filled Catulus and his legionaries with dread.

Faced with the frightening task of encountering the multitudinous horde under these conditions, the majority of the unnerved Romans broke camp without engaging the enemy and fled for a second time. Supposedly, as the soldiers began to withdraw, Catulus unsuccessfully urged them to return and man their stations, but his attempts were futile because the legionaries were bent on retreating. However, Catulus worried that if they were observed fleeing in the face of the enemy, then they might be regarded as dishonourable. To mitigate this possibility, he rushed to the front of the retreat and led his soldiers away, so that if the withdrawal was viewed as disgraceful,

then he would receive the blame, not his soldiers.

This is an interesting tale, but it is probably a historical revision, which likely originated from Catulus' memoirs and should be viewed sceptically. It can be argued that he abandoned his post in the Alps because it was no longer tenable, and he preferred to acquire a more defensible position. The same can be said for his desertion of his Atiso fortress. With the river running dry, he had lost a major protective barrier, and the bridge was in danger of collapsing in the meantime. Nonetheless, Catulus failed to achieve his only goal: prevent the barbarians from passing through the Alps and into Italy. He surrendered the Alpine passes without offering much resistance, and he did the same with his position on the Atiso River. The ancient writers asserted that he caught up with the fleeing troops and led the retreat to save his soldiers from ignominy, but all that this proves is that Catulus was fleeing more quickly than his subordinates. It seems that Catulus probably ordered the retreat but revised the story to present himself in a selfless light. However, if the Romans fled the fortress against his commands, as was claimed, then he failed to instill proper discipline in his soldiers, which at the very least presents him as a poor leader. Regardless of the impetus and sequence of events, Catulus had twice retreated in the face of the enemy and failed to accomplish his objective of halting the barbarian advance, but at least he and his army survived to fight another day.⁸

When the Cimbri arrived near Catulus' former camp on the Atiso, they had no trouble fording the calm river, and they found the Roman bivouac relatively deserted. However, the fortress on the far bank of the Atiso was still held by a cohort, which consisted of nearly 500 Romans. They perhaps remained behind to slow the barbarian advance and permit the bulk of their army to retreat unmolested. The tribesmen attacked the camp without demur and captured it, but they were so struck by the Romans' valour in the fort that they spared their lives and released them. They only required the captured Romans to swear an oath – probably to never fight against them – on a brazen bull, which represented one of their gods.⁹ A different author asserted that they fought courageously, and due to their own bravery and cunning, they were able to escape the Cimbri and reunite with Catulus. Regardless of the varied accounts, the cohort seems to have boldly engaged the barbarians and survived. Yet, with this token resistance absent and Catulus leading his soldiers away from the enemy, the entire region was essentially ceded to the Cimbri by

default. There were no Roman forces nearby willing and able to challenge the barbarian horde, and as such, the Cimbri decided to remain in the area and took full advantage of the dearth of Roman combatants.¹⁰

The Cimbri settled into the area known as Venetia in northern Italy, where they grew spoiled by the comfortable lifestyle. Ancient authors reported that moderate weather and an abundance of food and wine sapped the tribe's warlike energies.¹¹ Overindulgence and easy living fattened their warriors, and they began exhibiting traits not normally associated with barbarians. The men became increasingly less masculine because of their new-found luxurious environment.¹² The tribemen who once endured extended hardships began to enjoy warm baths, indoor living, cooked meat and spent much of their time gorging themselves on strong wine. Regardless of their newly acquired comfortable lifestyle, they were still an immense and dangerous horde, which threatened the Republic. They controlled a large portion of territory that formerly fell under the Romans' domain and were completely unchallenged. After years of nomadic wanderings, the Cimbri lingered there and would have been pleased to permanently call the region home.¹³

Following Catulus' failures, Marius was updated on the dismal state of affairs and asked to return to the capital, presumably to provide an update on his campaign and present his plan to defeat the Cimbri. Once again, he arrived in Rome a beloved hero, and the Senate readily approved a triumph for his crushing victory at Aquae Sextiae. The whole of Rome was afflicted with apprehension, and they likely looked forward to his grand triumph with eager anticipation. It was a means to take their minds off the looming war for survival. Marius believed that the Roman people, his soldiers and surely himself all deserved a celebratory triumph for vanquishing the Teutones and Ambrones, but he discreetly declined the honour. There was no time for such festivities when the Cimbri were roaming unchecked in the Republic's realm. Instead, he promptly departed to rendezvous with Catulus, who was camped near the Po River. He also sent word to his soldiers who were still in Gaul to march at once towards Catulus' location to prepare Rome's defence.¹⁴

When Marius' and Catulus' armies united, they numbered approximately 52,000 legionaries. This combined force, led by Marius, was stationed in a defensible location near the Po River to prevent the Cimbri from moving further south into Italy. However, seeing that the

tribesmen weren't advancing towards him, Marius crossed the Po and neared the barbarians, whereby he received a Cimbric envoy.¹⁵ Despite the tribe's overindulgence and Marius' military prowess, the Cimbri still exhibited no fear of Rome.¹⁶ Possibly as a consequence, the general obligingly offered to fight the barbarians, but the Cimbri refused, claiming that they were waiting for their allies to arrive. Apparently, they had not learned of the Teutones' and Ambrones' appalling fate. Then, as the Cimbri had done so many times before, they demanded land on which to settle for themselves and their tardy allies. A befuddled Marius inquired as to which allies they were referring. The emissaries responded, the Teutones, but they may have also mentioned the Ambrones. Upon hearing this, the Romans momentarily lost their composure and a chorus of laughter erupted. Likely with a sly grin on his weathered face, Marius replied to the barbarians, 'Then don't trouble yourself with your brethren, for they have land, and they will have it forever – land which we have given them.' The Cimbric representatives weren't aware that their allies were serving as fence posts and fertilizer, but they immediately perceived Marius' mockery. They responded with insults and threats, and they informed Marius that once their allies arrived, the Romans would no longer be laughing. Marius clearly observed that they still didn't comprehend the Teutones' and Ambrones' fates. To prove his point, the consul stated, 'Verily, they are here, and it will not be right for you to go away before you have embraced your brethren.' When Marius said this, he gave a signal and his subordinates produced a few captured Teuton kings, possibly including Teutobodus, from a nearby tent. He and his fellow chieftains meekly stood before the Cimbric emissaries defeated and in chains. The Cimbri finally understood why their allies had not arrived. They were dead, vanquished by Marius.¹⁷

The stunned envoy returned to the Cimbric camp and informed one of their kings, Boeorix, that their allies had been slain and a handful of Teuton kings were in the Romans' custody. This news undoubtedly sent shockwaves through the Cimbric bivouac. The Cimbri had handily beaten numerous Republican armies, and they probably bore little respect for Rome's military capabilities. However, learning that Marius had essentially eradicated both the Teutones and the Ambrones, other than the captured survivors who were sold as slaves, surely sparked new-found reservations over engaging the Romans. Losing two of their allies was a major blow to their strategy and certainly limited their overall numbers. Nevertheless, King Boeorix still had an enormous numerical advantage and believed that his

soldiers could most likely defeat another Roman army. Regardless of any lingering apprehensions, Boeorix intended settling the conflict sooner rather than later.¹⁸

The Cimbric king and his advisors angrily galloped towards the Roman encampment to seek an audience with Marius, which was duly granted. Boeorix demanded that Marius immediately agree to meet the barbarians in battle to determine control over the region, and he even left it up to the general to choose the time and place of the encounter. Marius sneered at the king's audacity to bark orders at him, informing the barbarians that Romans did not allow the enemy to dictate their military affairs. However, Marius responded that he was willing to make an exception for the Cimbri. The consul instructed the king to meet him near Vercellae, also called the Raudian Plain, in northern Italy, either the next day or three days following their conference (the ancient sources differ). Then and there, he would gladly accept the tribesman's challenge. The king agreed, and the envoy departed. The Romans and Cimbri both subsequently busied themselves with preparations for battle.¹⁹

In their haste, the Cimbri provided Marius with an unmistakable edge by allowing him to pick the battle's setting. The consul was skilled at choosing landscapes that favoured his battle plans and Roman warfare. Flat open plains like the field at Vercellae were conducive to Roman cavalry strikes and their normal infantry operations, but wide battlefields could also be a detriment. The Cimbri may have numbered between 180,000 and 200,000, including women and children, if the ancient writers are to be believed. Suffice it to say, their army vastly outnumbered Marius' legions, and spacious battlefields allowed the barbarians to use their numbers to their advantage. They could occupy much wider regions than the smaller Roman force, which put the legionaries at risk of becoming outflanked and enveloped by the massive army. Marius' location must have seemed very inviting to the Cimbri, who quickly accepted his suggested site.²⁰

Before the battle, the general had been working to implement a military reform in his legions to create an additional advantage. One of the infantry's primary weapons was the pilum, essentially a spear.²¹ For much of the Roman Republic's history, the head of the pilum was attached to a shaft by two iron rivets. Marius gave instructions to remove one of the iron rivets and replace it with a wooden dowel to weaken the pilum. The reason for this was twofold. When a legionary

launched his javelin at the enemy, it either struck a shield, a body or landed harmlessly on the ground. With two iron pins fastening the pilum together, it remained strong enough to keep its shape and be reused. By diminishing its strength, Marius ensured that when a javelin struck its target, the spearhead either broke from the shaft or became warped. A mangled spear that wedged in an enemy's shield would drag in the ground, rendering the shield useless or making it overwhelmingly laborious to carry.²² Moreover, if a legionary threw his javelin and entirely missed his target, then when it landed, the wooden pin broke and left the spear either bent or entirely detached from the shaft. This mostly guaranteed that the enemy could not collect the Roman pilums and employ them against the legionaries.²³

On 30 July 101 BC, when the Roman and Cimbric generals completed their preparations, they both moved towards their positions on the Raudian Plain. Catulus commanded just over 20,000 soldiers, and Marius led 32,000. Marius placed Catulus and his soldiers at the centre of the Roman position, while the consul divided his troops in two, placing them on either side of Catulus. Marius believed that the battle would be won on the wings because of their manoeuvrability, strength and experience, rather than in the centre, and he consequently chose to lead them.

Meanwhile, the Cimbri inched along in a basic square formation with their men as deep as they were wide, and their massed troops purportedly covered an area of considerably more than ten square miles. Their cavalry, 15,000 strong, were adorned with helmets fashioned to resemble fearsome beasts and topped with tall plumes, exaggerating the riders' height. They also donned iron breastplates, white shields and were armed with swords much larger than the Roman *gladius*.²⁴

With their troops approaching their battle stations, Marius and Catulus both broke to pledge votive offerings to the gods in exchange for victory. Marius promised a grand sacrifice, and Catulus promised the day's spoils to the gods for their help. Marius, however, did not wait for victory. He sacrificed multiple animals, and the beasts' entrails were presented to him to inspect in the hope that they would reveal the gods' opinion of his battle plan. He wasn't disappointed. Upon carefully examining the innards, Marius determined that the signs were propitious, and he loudly exclaimed, 'Mine is the victory!' One ancient author claimed that this episode actually occurred during the battle, but it seems unfathomable that the two highest-ranking

generals wandered off to converse with the gods rather than commanding their soldiers in the heat of battle. It's safe to assume that it occurred long before any fighting transpired.²⁵

The details presented by the ancient writers of the battle at Vercellae are suspect and often contradictory, and biases are abundantly clear more than 2,000 years later. Nevertheless, Plutarch contended that the battle commenced when a Cimbric contingent charged the Romans, but they didn't opt for a direct assault on the Roman centre. The barbarians advanced towards the Romans and then abruptly turned right. They were hoping to either draw the Romans out of their ordered ranks and create a weakness to exploit, or to possibly outflank them. The Roman commanders weren't fooled by the transparent ruse, but the foot soldiers were hoodwinked. A legionary excitedly screamed that the barbarians were retreating, which of course they weren't, but the Romans broke their lines and impetuously gave chase to the tribesmen anyway. While the legionaries were in pursuit, another segment of the Cimbric army advanced and attacked the vulnerable and disorderly Romans, who must have been easy prey for the Cimbri.²⁶

Meanwhile, the movement of more than 100,000 men purportedly caused dust to pollute the air and made it difficult to see. At this moment, Marius led his wing to attack the enemy, but he inexplicably marched past the barbarians because the air was thick with the fog of war. As a result, he roamed about aimlessly seeking the enemy. Plutarch presented this dubious titbit and likely found it in either Sulla's or Catulus' tendentious memoirs.²⁷ This has to be a revision intended to downgrade Marius' contributions in the battle and present him as a bumbling dolt too blind and clumsy to locate an army occupying more than ten square miles directly in front of him. Marius was the most experienced commander on the plain that day, and it is inconceivable that a man with his military experience could lose track of the enemy under these circumstances, especially one as large as the Cimbri. The marching soldiers likely kicked up considerable dust clouds, but Marius would have closely examined the enemy's location and had scouts busily providing him almost real-time intelligence. Regardless, this is a fictional tale simply meant to denigrate Marius' notable contributions.²⁸

Nevertheless, the battle raged on, with Sulla and Catulus incurring the brunt of the fighting, but the Romans slowly gained the upper hand, largely due to the natural elements. The bright sun was to the

legionaries' backs, and it shone on the Cimbri's faces, impeding their vision, which was clearly necessary for hand-to-hand combat. The sweltering Italian summer supposedly also hindered the tribesmen. The barbarians were from the northern edges of Europe, and according to Plutarch, they weren't acclimatized to the local weather, which adversely affected them. Consequently, during the course of the battle, they were worn down by the summer heat, giving Rome another distinct advantage. While Plutarch probably wrote this with sincerity, it simply cannot be true. The barbarians had spent ample time in Gaul, Spain and Italy. They hadn't been in Europe's northern regions in many years, and they must have been entirely accustomed to the local climate. Regardless of this inaccuracy, the dust that supposedly caused Marius to inexplicably lose the enemy aided Catulus and Sulla. The thick haze limited their soldiers' visibility, which meant that they were unaware of the barbarian ranks' true depth. Because of their ignorance, they did not lose hope but were encouraged during the prolonged melee, thinking they had nearly slain the enemy.²⁹

Plutarch's account of the battle borders on the unbelievable, but the remainder of the ancient sources combined, in addition to portions of Plutarch's version, presents a much more plausible and somewhat consistent strategy and sequence of events. It appears that Marius and his deputies adroitly devised a plan that exploited multiple elements. The consul prudently chose to arrive at Vercellae before the barbarians, and he stubbornly stood firm in his chosen location, which compelled the tribesmen to march even further to reach his position. Naturally, this forced the Cimbri to expend additional energy, leaving them already drained of vigour before the battle ever began.³⁰ Marius also masterfully chose a time and location for the engagement to create an environment that was troublesome for the barbarians. He situated his legionaries so that the sun was at their backs and in the faces of the tribesmen. Supposedly, the sun's rays bounced off of the legionaries bronze helmets with such brightness that it appeared that flames were emanating from the sky, which hindered the Cimbri's eyesight. The wind was also blowing in the enemy's direction, and it carried the dust kicked up by the manoeuvrings. This impacted the barbarians' vision to a degree and forced them to hold their shields high to guard their eyes, which in turn depleted more of their strength.³¹ Furthermore, Marius chose a time for the battle when he knew there would be a morning mist just dense enough to mask some of his troop arrangements and movements before the sun dissipated

the residual vapour, which left the Cimbri in a state of partial ignorance.³²

Using the time of day, the natural environment and by forcing the barbarians to advance to his chosen position, Marius acquired an unmistakable advantage. Once Marius masterfully weaved these strategic benefits into his grand plan, it is probable that he organized his soldiers as Plutarch claimed, with Catulus commanding the centre and Marius leading the wings.³³ However, when his legions were prepared and the other elements of his battle plan were advantageously exploited, Marius instinctively discovered another opportunity and immediately seized it. The barbarians were tardy to his chosen battle site and hamstrung by fatigue, mist, dust and sunshine, and when they finally arrived on the plain, they busied themselves with rearranging their ranks and making final adjustments. The consul keenly realized that they were vulnerable so long as they were in disarray. Therefore, he sprung his attack before they were prepared.³⁴ The shocked Cimbri noticed that the Romans were advancing before they were ready. In response, they desperately let loose their cavalry in the hope that it would stave off the approaching Romans long enough for them to form their lines, but it was too little too late. The disorganized Cimbric horsemen were quickly driven back by the organized Romans, and they frantically retreated into the Cimbric infantry lines, causing chaos, confusion and even more disorder. The Cimbric army wasn't prepared to meet the legionaries, and the cavalry's frenzied retreat exacerbated their conspicuous problems. Then, as the Cimbri were urgently trying to prepare for the Romans' arrival, Marius' troops advanced towards the tribesmen. When the bulk of the Roman legions reached the muddled Cimbri and initially clashed with them, the battle was already lost for the barbarians. Hails of lethal Roman pilums, followed by a wall of Roman swords and shields, slammed into the tribesmen, who were unable to mount an adequate defence. The legionaries capitalized on their unpreparedness and the advantages that Marius had so painstakingly provided, and they began to systematically slaughter the vulnerable Cimbri.³⁵

Eventually, thanks to Marius' skillful planning, Roman determination and Mother Nature, the battle turned into a painful Cimbric rout. A portion of the barbarian warriors were indiscriminately killed during the conflict, in part because they were unable to flee the massacre. Allegedly, the Cimbric commanders

foolishly bound the front lines with long chains to prevent their ranks from faltering, but this also inhibited their ability to manoeuvre or retreat in the face of annihilation. When these unfortunate soldiers, as well as many of their comrades from the secondary and tertiary lines, were dead or helplessly dying, the rest of the Cimbri began to withdraw to their baggage train, where the barbarian women were waiting. Disappointed, infuriated and worried about their future, the women adopted bizarre courses of action. When they observed their male relatives shamefully fleeing, they mercilessly killed many of them. Other retreating Cimbric warriors took matters into their own hands. A number of them attached themselves to the horns or legs of their livestock so that they would be trampled to death rather than being killed by the Romans or disgracefully becoming their slaves.³⁶

The wives and mothers naturally couldn't bear the painful thought of the Romans capturing their children and possibly abusing, enslaving or killing them. As a result, a sizeable quantity of the barbarian women resolved to either defend themselves or accept a quick death in an episode that reads suspiciously similar to the first battle at Aquae Sextiae's conclusion. When the Roman legions swept through the tribesmen's camp, they encountered many barbarian women who were unprepared to submissively surrender. Using the wagons and high ground as protective barriers, the women boldly managed to thwart the unrelenting Roman advance for a considerable period of time, but eventually, the Romans overcame these obstacles. They showed little mercy for many of the female combatants. The legionaries scalped an untold number of them, mutilated their bodies and left them in disgraceful conditions. With few remaining options, the surviving women choked their children, slit their throats or tossed them in the path of carts or animals to be crushed to death. These women also found creative ways of committing suicide. Some took turns cutting each other's throats. Others fashioned nooses that they slipped around their necks while attaching the ropes' other ends to livestock. When the animals were prodded, they excitedly took off, which killed the women. One Cimbric mother produced an especially disturbing spectacle. Using a noose, she suspended herself from a pole while additionally hanging her two children from each of her feet. The trio dangled to death as the last of the Cimbri were slowly exterminated or captured.³⁷

The carnage was unbelievable, but the casualty estimates vary to a great degree. Reports claim that during the battle, the Cimbric deaths

ranged anywhere from 65,000 to 120,000, or as many as 160,000. Another 60,000 were possibly captured and likely sold into slavery, benefiting the Romans.³⁸ The Cimbri had numerous kings, probably because they were a confederation of Cimbric tribes with different chieftains, but their leaders didn't fare any better than their other countrymen. The Cimbric kings Boeorix and Lugius both died during the battle, while other chieftains committed suicide by running full speed into each other's swords. Claudicus and Caesorix, additionally called Cimbric kings, weren't so fortunate. They were captured by legionaries, who intended exhibiting them in a humiliating triumphal display.³⁹ The Roman losses compared to the Cimbri's were infinitesimal. Their casualties supposedly totalled only 300, but this statistic should be taken with scepticism.⁴⁰

When the violence finally subsided, Marius' men seized the enemy booty, but they allegedly delivered it to Catulus as a reward for his valour and leadership during the battle. Even though many of the troops recognized Catulus' successful role in the affair, he wished to prove his decisive contributions. Therefore, he ordered his subordinates to investigate the battlefield. When they returned, it was purportedly revealed that a large portion of the Cimbric corpses were pierced with pilums bearing his name. Prior to the battle, he ordered his soldiers to carve the name of Catulus into their javelins, which made it easier to decide whose troops inflicted the most damage. It was also reported that Catulus' soldiers managed to capture thirty-one enemy standards, while Marius' troops seized only two. The claims about Catulus' exploits sound highly suspicious and were probably derived from his incredibly biased memoirs. Whether this is true or not, Catulus may have played a vital role in the battle, but Marius was the senior officer and sitting consul. Consequently, Marius received the credit and likely deserved it. He was in charge of the legions and was probably chiefly responsible for the day's battle plan and thorough preparations. Without Marius, the Cimbri likely would have embarrassed Catulus yet again.⁴¹

With most of the formidable barbarian coalition finally defeated, only one major tribe remained, but the last vestiges of the alliance dissolved without throwing a single pilum. The Tigurini, who were allegedly held in reserve in the north, heard about the complete destruction of the Teutones, Ambrones and powerful Cimbri. Upon learning of their grim fate, they quickly withdrew rather than facing Marius' wrath.⁴² So far as Rome was concerned, Gaius Marius had

singularly saved them from certain destruction, defeating foes too powerful for any other Roman general to vanquish.⁴³ During the campaign, he had slain as many as 360,000 barbarians and apprehended another 150,000.⁴⁴ His success came from instilling discipline and order in the legions and introducing creative military reforms, but he also cleverly utilized the landscape to his benefit. He additionally launched surprise attacks, confronted each tribe one at a time, starting with the smallest, and he only engaged when victory seemed certain. While his former co-consul, Catulus, attained redemption for his previous failures, Marius' stature and reputation swelled until it approached that of a demigod in Rome. For his successful endeavours, Marius was widely considered the third founder of Rome, alongside the mythical Romulus and the mighty general Camillus, and many Romans made ritual offerings to the gods as well as Marius. He was the undeniable saviour of Rome, reaching a level of honour, respect and love earned by few, if any, Romans before him.⁴⁵

Sometime after vanquishing the barbarians, Marius publicly exhibited his appreciation for his victory in a way that also won him plaudits in Rome. Using some of the remaining spoils from the wars with the Ambrones, Teutones and Cimbri, Marius dedicated a grand temple, likely on the Capitoline Hill, to Honour and Virtue. He celebrated the temple's grand opening by hosting Greek plays for all of Rome. While many of his countrymen appreciated Greek culture, Marius' longstanding disdain for the Greeks hadn't lessened. In fact, it appears that he had no interest in attending the Greek-influenced events that he had funded. After he made a brief public appearance at the theatre, he quickly departed, but he didn't need to linger to reap the benefits of his munificence. The Romans appreciated festivities, demonstrations of deference to the gods and virtuous behaviour. Marius clearly understood this, and he probably hoped that by commissioning the temple's construction he would also please the gods and be able to present himself to the electorate as a humble man. This, of course, could be parlayed into political capital, which was probably Marius' plan.⁴⁶

Before long, Marius' thoughts inevitably shifted to his impending triumph. He had forgone the honour awarded to him for his victory over the Teutones and the Ambrones, but the Romans demanded that he celebrate two triumphs for this fruitful labours at Aquae Sextiae and Vercellae. He tactfully declined the double honour and claimed

that one would suffice, and he also announced that he intended on sharing his triumph with Catulus, which was a most unusual decision. Considering that Marius was already planning on running for re-election, it's quite probable that he strived to be viewed as an unpretentious, self-effacing man. To achieve this goal, he endeavoured to prove that he didn't require multiple honours and was more than pleased to generously share accolades. Including Catulus in his triumph provided other added benefits. Catulus was an aristocrat, and Marius must have hoped that if he shared the immense honour with a nobleman, then perhaps it would reduce the elite's animosity towards him.⁴⁷ However, one author wrote that Catulus' soldiers were prepared to persuade Marius to permit Catulus the honour or they would deny him the triumph altogether. Regardless, both Marius and Catulus victoriously strode into Rome as venerated heroes and were celebrated for their contributions to the Republic.⁴⁸

Marius' second triumph probably occurred in mid to late 101 BC, and it was a joint celebration with Catulus. They shared the honour for vanquishing one of Rome's greatest threats, and it probably followed the traditional prescribed formula.⁴⁹ Just like his previous triumph, glad-handing elected officials likely led the procession and were followed by trumpeters. Behind the musicians was the war's extensive booty, which had been transported to Rome after defeating the Teutones, Ambrones and Cimbri. A troupe of flutists then preceded the decorated sacrificial beasts and a multitude of discomfited prisoners of war, as well as their military insignia. The humbled enemy leadership trailed not far behind.⁵⁰ The barbarian kings, Teutobodus, Caesorix and Claodicus, were surely exhibited in chains before the victorious generals' chariots.⁵¹ Then Rome viewed the two celebrated Romans, who likely wore the ceremonial *toga picta* and painted their faces red. The triumphal procession's closing scene was an elongated parade of Marius' 'mules' and Catulus' soldiers. After the cortege, sacrifices and festivities concluded, the barbarian kings were most likely heaved into the Tullianum, strangled to death and subsequently disposed of in the Tiber River.⁵²

A triumph was normally a celebratory affair that filled the eternal city with high spirits, but Rome was in a more sombre mood because of a completely unrelated affair. The Romans believed that parricide, or the murder of one's own parents, was one of the most despicable crimes, and around the time of Marius' triumph, a Roman named Publicius Malleolus killed his mother with his slaves' assistance. Rome

was horrified and offended by such a vile misdeed, which had supposedly never occurred in Roman history before this point. Malleolus was duly convicted and condemned to the established penalty for parricide, which was the *poena cullei*. Roman law required those guilty of murdering a parent to be sewn in a sack and tossed into the sea to their death, and that was Malleolus' fate. While the city was purged of his crime, it placed a noticeable damper on Marius' anticipated triumph, but regardless of this pall, there was no denying that Marius was viewed as much more than a mere man. He was one of the most celebrated men in Roman history. He saved the Republic from destruction and was unrivalled in military leadership. He enjoyed unprecedented power and was the source of seemingly endless love and adulation from the Roman people. He achieved all of this by around the age of 56, but his public life was far from over. He wasn't prepared to retire from electoral politics, and it seems that he wished to retain and even augment his tremendous prestige. After his triumph over the Cimbri, he adopted a strange habit of frequently, if not exclusively, drinking from a cup specifically designed to resemble the kantharos that one of the Roman gods supposedly drank from after orchestrating a crushing military victory. Marius was certainly successful and widely revered, but if he was under any delusions, then Marius quickly learned that he didn't enjoy the same benefits as the gods.⁵³

XIII

PAX

‘Being a man altogether ignorant of civil life and ordinary politics, he received all his advancement from war; and supposing his power and glory would little by little decrease by lying quietly out of action, he was eager by every means to excite some new commotions.’

– *Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus*

After successfully concluding the barbarian wars to great acclaim and proudly marching down Rome’s thoroughfares during his second dazzling triumph, Gaius Marius could easily have retired from public life and been viewed as one of the most illustrious Romans to ever live. Unfortunately, he was not yet prepared to relinquish his firm grip on power. He had enjoyed five consulships, mostly as an acting general rather than a statesman, and he had been awarded two triumphs. This was much more than most Romans could have reasonably imagined. Nonetheless, he was determined to obtain his sixth consulship, but during a time of peace. The impetus for this decision seems to have been that he had intended enacting another agrarian bill for his soldiers. Just as he had settled many of his Jugurthine War veterans in Africa, he wished to provide handsome tracts of land for a portion of his recently disbanded legionaries, but he must have worried that if he was not consul, then the measure would surely fail. Beyond this, Marius may have selfishly wished to hold onto power for one more year to relish the benefits and prestige of the office. None of his previous consulships occurred during times of peace when he could fully enjoy the office in Rome, but securing the state’s highest elected post for 100 BC would provide that opportunity.

The sprawling Republic was increasingly in the midst of one conflict or another of varying degrees of intensity. However, after Marius defeated Jugurtha and the northern barbarian tribes, Rome enjoyed a brief period of relative *pax*, or peace, from warring with major foreign nations, barring a few comparatively minor conflicts. Marius’ transition from a military to a peacetime role must have been challenging. He was accustomed to the chain of command’s rigidity, amassing the spoils of war and receiving admiration from the Romans whom he defended, and he had become used to wielding the vast and

largely unquestioned power of a military commander. As a result, his shift to domestic politics was not without unmistakable difficulties.

When the general announced that he was planning on seeking a sixth consulship, not all Romans were thrilled. After all, a sixth consulship was considered wholly unnecessary, given that there were no pressing existential threats at the time. Nevertheless, he canvassed for one of the state's executive offices. Very quickly, he found campaigning in such a period to be onerous and the masses less than respectful to the general who guaranteed their freedom, or so he likely believed. He was readily agitated when Romans spoke negatively of him or even if they failed to bestow the praise that he presumed he deserved. However, he attempted to mask his true feelings and character like an adroit politician in order to gain the masses' support, and he shamefully pandered to individuals in all ways, which surely sickened the consul and many of the spectators.

Even addressing Roman assemblies was a cumbersome enterprise for him. They were not as silent, orderly and obedient as standing legions, awaiting their general's orders. They were comprised of noisy, differing factions who at times were more than willing to publicly challenge him. For Marius, it was much easier to be a general than a statesman who depended on popularity, and it was far less complicated to campaign on a platform of defeating an external threat than electioneering during peacetime.¹

However, at certain moments during his campaign, his true character was revealed. As he canvassed for his sixth term, a group of Romans demanded that he answer for what they viewed as an illegal action previously committed by the consul. One thousand men from Camerinum, an Umbrian city roughly 100 miles north-east of Rome, served under Marius during the Cimbric campaign. He was so impressed by their bravery that he awarded them Roman citizenship without consulting the Senate or acquiring the people's approval. After being accused and questioned by some inquisitive and perhaps instigative Romans about his unsanctioned act of enfranchisement, Marius momentarily abandoned his feigned deference to the people. Plutarch paraphrased the general's obstinate response: 'The law spoke too softly to be heard in such a noise of war.' The masses likely weren't impressed by Marius' contemptuous response, which alienated many voters and further distressed the statesman.²

Re-securing the equestrians and 'unwashed' masses' allegiance wasn't Marius' only campaign obstacle. His frequent scathing

invectives against the nobility during and following his first successful consular election guaranteed that many of them were uncompromisingly hostile towards him. Adding to their dislike was the fact that he was a *populares* and tended to support measures largely loathed by the aristocrats. Furthermore, Marius was an incredibly influential statesman, which, combined with his partisanship, threatened the nobility, and subsequently, the anti-Marian faction sought and located a leader to spearhead the effort to thwart Marius' plans. They chose a well-respected man whom even the great general feared. Marius' old friend, Metellus, led the opposition, strenuously opposed Marius' consular bid and marshaled his considerable political capital. Metellus probably realized that he couldn't defeat Marius in a consular election. Despite his troubles on the campaign trail, Marius was simply too powerful and too popular, but Metellus wisely understood that to stymie Marius' agenda, he didn't need to defeat the commander at the ballot box. He just needed to be elected as his consular colleague to torpedo Marius' programme. Therefore, Metellus announced his candidacy for the consulship.³

Marius understood that to be elected to his sixth consulship, have a fruitful administration and acquire a favourable consular colleague, he needed powerful allies to combat those who were hostile towards his candidacy, including Metellus. As a result, he formed a pact with two politicians who commanded a large throng of adherents, Lucius Appuleius Saturninus and Gaius Servilius Glaucia.⁴ Glaucia was an adept politician who had been admitted into the senatorial order, and Saturninus was the populist tribune who had aided Marius at least twice before. However, neither Saturninus nor Glaucia was held in very high esteem. In fact, both were widely considered dissolute.

Saturninus had a documented history of misbehaviour. At one point, King Mithridates of Pontus, a kingdom on the Black Sea, dispatched emissaries to Rome with the purpose of bribing senatorial power brokers, and Saturninus believed that this presented a chance to oppose and harass the Senate. Consequently, he attempted to capitalize on the situation, expose the venal senators and prevent the transfer of the inducements, but in the process he offended and physically harmed the envoys. Diplomatic emissaries such as these were protected by an ancient honourable code, and they were viewed as inviolable. To unnecessarily contravene their safety carried a maximum punishment of death in Rome, which Saturninus understood. Because of his improprieties, charges were filed against

him, but he employed his political acumen and leveraged his considerable influence over the masses to his benefit. Thousands of Romans pitied him and rushed to his trial to express their support. The judge, prosecuting attorney and likely even the jurors were alarmed by the groundswell and concerned for their own well-being, and therefore, all charges against Saturninus were dropped.⁵

This was not Saturninus' only such close encounter. When Metellus was appointed as censor, he was charged with examining the public and the senatorial body for immorality, and the senators found to be unfit were expected to be expelled from the Senate. Metellus was appalled by Glaucia's and Saturninus' glaring malfeasance, and attempted to appropriately address their many misdeeds. However, his efforts were blocked. The fact that Metellus even dared to cross him understandably infuriated Saturninus, who in turn attempted to severely injure or possibly kill Metellus, but after a bloody confrontation, Metellus somehow survived. While Glaucia's and Saturninus' alleged immorality was never addressed, neither of them forgot the episode, and they lay in wait for an opportunity to return the favour to Metellus.⁶

By late 101 BC, Saturninus and Glaucia probably persuaded their adherents to support Marius' re-election bid and his chosen candidate for co-consul. Meanwhile, the general admitted large numbers of his faithful legionaries into the city to influence the assemblies and counter Metellus' popularity. They likely entered and participated in the voting under the not-so-vague assumption that they would support Marius' candidacy and his chosen slate of candidates. Marius also disgracefully provided prodigious bribes to many electors to gain their wholehearted support, which was certainly illegal. Marius had once before been accused of electoral bribery, but he had been acquitted by a tied vote.⁷ Despite his willingness to purchase voters' favour, not all Romans required enormous inducements to support his candidacy. Some believed that the general had honourably earned the privilege as a reward for his service against the Cimbri.⁸

Through these methods, Marius victoriously overcame Metellus as an obstacle to the state's top post and obtained his coveted sixth consulship. By using his political muscle, he also prevented Metellus from becoming his consular colleague, which would have been disastrous to his ambitious upcoming agenda. Instead, his co-consul for 100 BC was Lucius Valerius Flaccus, who was widely considered to be Marius' obedient puppet during their consular term. Once Marius

was inaugurated in 100 BC, he officially achieved an exceptionally rare feat. Only one other Roman had served as many consular terms as Marius. His name was Marcus Valerius Corvus, a famed general, statesman and dictator. However, Corvus' six consulships were dispersed over a forty-five-year period, while Marius' occurred over the course of just eight years. Marius' firm grasp on power was unprecedented, but it was certainly not unchallenged nor everlasting.⁹

The despicable nature of Marius' partner, Saturninus, became ever-apparent during Saturninus' campaign for the tribuneship of 100 BC. One of his opponents was an aristocratic politician named Aulus Nonius, who opposed both Glaucia and Saturninus politically and was directly competing with Saturninus for the tribuneship. Apparently, Saturninus was rightly troubled that Nonius might win the election. After the ballots were counted, his concerns materialized as Nonius indeed defeated him and was duly elected to the tribuneship, which infuriated Saturninus. So, he assembled a group of his thugs and ordered them to murder the tribune-elect. His cronies malevolently sought Nonius, who quickly caught wind of the treacherous plot. In a panic, he fled from the angry crowd and into a nearby inn, but he was soon discovered and ruthlessly stabbed to death in cold blood. The next morning, Saturninus' ally, Glaucia, who was acting in his capacity as praetor, hastily convened the assembly to hold a fresh election for the newly vacated office created by Nonius' untimely death. With Saturninus' adversary neutralized and his seditious rabble flocking to the polls, Saturninus was installed in Nonius' stead as a tribune for 100 BC. Even though he was clearly guilty of murder, Saturninus was never charged for his crime because his opponents feared his powerful tribenary powers.¹⁰

Regardless of Saturninus' illicit acts, as Marius' consular term began, the popular general continued his inadvisable alliance with the disreputable tribune. As part of the clandestine partnership, Saturninus proposed a few measures on Marius' behalf. One bill aimed to create colonies populated by some of Rome's Italian allies, and in each colony, three Italians were to receive full Roman citizenship. This may have been a method of rewarding some of the allies who ably served Marius during the Cimbric War or a means of mollifying the Italians who were increasingly unhappy with their relationship with Rome.¹¹ The other proposal was to award many of Marius' poorest Cimbric War veterans with land on which to settle. This was probably similar to his earlier settlement, but it appears that each

designated legionary would receive less land than the Jugurthine War veterans, which rankled many of Marius' troops. When they loudly complained, Marius responded, 'May no Roman ever think that land too small which suffices to maintain him.' Regardless of the diminished size of the land grants, the plan was to evenly apportion the Gallic territory acquired during the Cimbric War among many of Marius' men. This was a controversial bill with plenty of opposition, but Marius forged ahead nonetheless. He probably wanted to reward his Cimbric War veterans with land, but the proposal also aimed to safeguard Rome's interests. The regions where these soldiers were to be transplanted did not have a long history of loyalty to Rome. With an influx of Roman legionaries permanently residing there, Marius likely believed that the wayward territory would become increasingly pro-Roman. Nevertheless, the bill met serious resistance, but a clause was inserted into the proposal that had major implications and guaranteed much of the Senate's opposition. The provision required that within five days of the bill's passage, all senators must avow to obey and never seek to undo the law.¹²

This was an offensive clause to the senators. It would weaken their influence, but if similar clauses became regularly inserted into bills, then the Senate would be rendered almost impotent and bound to the whims of the people. However, the provision may have had another use. Even though Marius wielded consular authority, he was still concerned about Metellus' influence. Consequently, he may have schemed with Saturninus to either entrap the nobleman into compliance or render him powerless. Saturninus and Marius believed that all possible scenarios were likely to produce favourable results. If the measure was passed, then Metellus might accept the controversial provision and essentially be neutralized as an impediment to their current agenda, and thus, safeguard their agrarian law from being repealed. Alternatively, he might refuse to agree to the oath and lose much of his support because he would be viewed as opposing the people's will. Lastly, if he stubbornly refused to adhere to the bill, then he could possibly even be punished.¹³ The prescribed penalty for failure to obey was expulsion from the Senate and a fine of twenty talents. Banishment from the Senate was a humiliating penalty, which largely annulled one's political power, but a fine of hundreds of pounds of silver had the potential to be financially ruinous. By proposing and advocating this measure, Saturninus was not only winning over a valuable ally in Marius, who was expected to reciprocate, but he was also assaulting the Senate, his favourite target.

This was a win-win situation for Saturninus.

When the bill was presented to the people, it was no less contentious and Marius needed all of the assistance that he could get. Saturninus had previously informed Marius' veterans of the vote's date so that they could be present to emphatically voice their support for the measure, but Saturninus' opposition also filled the assembly and vigorously attempted to prevent a vote. In response, Saturninus instructed his fervent followers to violently confront the bill's foes and send them to flight. In a shocking breach of decorum, the tribune's faction openly assaulted their political opponents in a scene that looked similar to a gang war, but as they fled, Saturninus accomplished his primary goal of ridding the forum of many of his political adversaries. However, this only addressed one obstacle. In Rome, when lightning was observed, public business was required to be adjourned for the day because they believed that it was a sign from the gods. Following the fierce disturbance between the factions, a bolt of lightning was noticed, and according to law, many Romans attempted to suspend the upcoming vote. Saturninus was unmoved by the omen and pressed harder for the people to consider his proposal without demur, but a sizeable portion of the citizenry was unconvinced by his overtures. Citing the weather phenomena, the crowd ultimately used brute force to compel Saturninus and his faction to temporarily withdraw, but the determined tribune and his ardent supporters quickly returned to the forum and eventually overpowered their opponents. With Saturninus firmly in power in the assembly, he finally called for the land allotment and the requisite oath's vote, which, considering Saturninus' control of the situation, unsurprisingly passed.¹⁴

Marius was clearly in league with Saturninus, but there is nothing to suggest that he was directly involved in the aforementioned violence. Nevertheless, even though he publicly supported the land bill, he concealed his approval of the provision that was aimed at the Senate. He acted as if it was an egregious affront to senators and the government's traditional order. When the Senate convened to discuss the law, Marius rose to speak, promptly denounced the act and claimed that the Senate would naturally support any just and good bill, but requiring an oath was wholly unnecessary and an offensive impediment. Regardless of whether it was attached to a worthwhile measure, Marius claimed that this provision limited the Senate's free will and was insulting to them as a governing body. He resolutely

announced that any enlightened gentleman would never agree to the measure's restricting pledge, and therefore, he declared that he would not take the oath. Metellus likewise stated his opposition to the provision and refused to consider agreeing to the pledge.¹⁵ However, his disapproval was not just with the oath. A conscientious man like Metellus surely found the entire bill problematic because its passage was unauthorized and unlawful. During the debate, there was an apparent occurrence of thunder, and it was enacted using violence, which technically made the law void. Regardless of the illegalities, it passed and placed the Senate in a precarious situation.¹⁶

After the people passed Saturninus' bill, the Senate was presented with a difficult decision to ponder, but five days later, when they were summoned to publicly swear to the oath, they were still languishing over their possible courses of action. Nevertheless, they slowly and obediently made their way to the forum. When the senators finally arrived before the assembled Romans, Marius turned to the senators and privately offered them some last-minute advice. In an apparent *volte-face*, Marius instructed them to affirm the pledge so long as the bill was legally enacted. He suggested that due to the violence and observance of lightning, the law would be nullified as being illegal and wouldn't be binding, but Marius' fellow senators weren't granted sufficient time to consider his suspicious eleventh-hour proposal. After briefly conferring with the Senate, Marius was the first to speak publicly. He dignifiedly stood and addressed the assembly, announcing to the eager but muted crowd that he would faithfully obey the law and their will. The spectators erupted with joyous shouts and applause, while the nobility incredulously watched the episode with disbelief. They were confused by Marius' abrupt change of heart and were irritated that he had abandoned them after initially opposing the provision. Nonetheless, Marius then walked towards the Temple of Saturn, where quaestors regularly administered oaths, and he publicly swore to loyally adhere to the provision, to much fanfare.¹⁷

Fearing the raucous mob, the other senators meekly followed Marius' example, and they all passively agreed to the oath except one. When it was Metellus' turn, he bravely declined to take the pledge, despite his colleague's impassioned pleadings or the impending punishment and public disdain. The honourable Metellus stood firm before the angry and intimidating assembly, and he exclaimed that he would rather be wrongly punished than debase his character by

agreeing to the reprehensible oath. The nobleman then excoriated his fellow senators for shamefully capitulating and surrendering their principles, and he gracefully marched out of the forum unsure of his future.¹⁸

Marius and Saturninus must have been incredibly pleased by their plan's ultimate realization and the predictable outcome, and shortly thereafter, Saturninus expediently produced criminal charges against Metellus. However, Saturninus wasn't satisfied with the prescribed punishment.¹⁹ He claimed that the law guaranteeing the veterans' agrarian land was unsafe so long as Metellus was freely living in Rome. To Saturninus' delight, it appears that he was provided with the justifications for seeking a much stiffer punishment.²⁰ Metellus probably refused to accept the unjust statutory penalty for rejecting the oath, and when he did this, Saturninus was presented with an opportunity to finally neutralize Metellus.²¹ Consequently, the tribune was able to portray the nobleman as a vile outlaw, and as a result, Saturninus presented a proposal to the assembly exiling Metellus from Rome and denying him 'fire, water, and shelter', which was eventually ratified. Some Romans demanded nothing less than his immediate execution. Others steadfastly rallied around Metellus, urged him to fight back and served as his armed guard, but he denounced their mutinous suggestions. Defeated but still unwilling to violate his principles, Metellus quietly accepted his fate and voluntarily withdrew from Rome, declaring, 'Either matters will mend and the people will change their minds and I shall return at their invitation, or, if matters remain as they are, it is best that I should be away.' Metellus retired to the Greek island of Rhodes, spending his days studying philosophy and entertaining guests.²² After his departure, his exile was officially sanctioned and publicly announced by Marius.²³ The general's greatest domestic adversary up to this point in his life was finally vanquished, which surely elated the bitter Marius.²⁴

With Saturninus fulfilling his end of the bargain, Marius was required to reciprocate. However, it was increasingly difficult to defend such a base man like Saturninus, whose depravity knew few limits. His actions were increasingly becoming detrimental to Marius' reputation and legacy, but as Marius' term wound down, matters threatened to spiral out of control.²⁵ Towards the end of 100 BC, Saturninus was re-elected to the tribunate, regardless of term limits and precedents, and his accomplice, Glaucia, sought the consulship and ran against an honourable Roman named Memmius. Both Glaucia

and Saturninus believed that it was unlikely that Glaucia could defeat Memmius, and to prevent this eventuality, they maliciously dispatched a gang of assassins who savagely bludgeoned Memmius to death in view of the electors as the votes were being tallied.²⁶ Allegedly, one of the duo's ruffians was named Mettius, and he was the one who successfully perpetrated the foul deed.²⁷

Rome was incensed by their lawlessness, and the people were determined to circumvent the courts and dispense vigilante justice. However, Saturninus was prepared for this possibility. After some of his enthusiastic supporters privately hailed him as general and king, to his delight, he raised and armed a force, and they gained control of much of the city's forum and surrounding government buildings to protect themselves and enforce their will. Saturninus and Glaucia hoped that Marius would defend their actions, or at least shield them from danger and perhaps prosecution. Their preferred scenario was one where no charges were filed and the elections were permitted to proceed with the living candidates, essentially granting Glaucia the consulship and retaining Saturninus as tribune.

At first, Marius attempted his best to ingratiate himself with the pro- and anti-Saturninus factions while at the same time inciting them against one another. During the episode, or perhaps just before Saturninus seized the capitol, the unruly tribune visited Marius' home to ask advice and solicit his support, but Saturninus' opponents were also there courting Marius' favour. With both parties in different sections of Marius' house at the same time, the consul claimed that he was suffering from a terrible bout of diarrhoea. He hoped that this would provide him with a believable reason to frequently excuse himself from the meetings so that he could personally relay information between both parties without being suspected of sharing intelligence. It's clear that he wanted to remain in both factions' good graces if possible, but he also aimed to spark a conflict between the two groups, which could only leave him in a more powerful position once one or both factions were weakened by the strife. However, he was eventually forced to act against Saturninus' and Glaucia's sedition. Their acts were indefensible. The public demanded justice, and the Senate proclaimed them public enemies and approved emergency consular powers to restore order. It did not take long for both the equestrians and senatorial class to begin to unify in disgust over the situation.²⁸

As consul, Marius was required to respond to Saturninus' revolt,

even though he and the rebellious tribune were surreptitious allies. Marius was nearing the end of his term, and he must have wished to avoid being entangled in an episode such as this and risk tarnishing his legacy. Nonetheless, with Rome demanding decisive action, he raised a small force to neutralize the rebels and bring the situation to a peaceful conclusion. Marius had no desire to see Saturninus unnecessarily killed, and he preferred to quietly end the standoff with as little bloodshed as possible. Unfortunately for Marius and Saturninus, this scenario wasn't what transpired. When he was prepared to engage Saturninus, the consul marched his hastily and reluctantly assembled troops towards Saturninus' belligerent combatants, who were holed up in the forum.²⁹ It was there that Marius led his troops in two small battles. The first witnessed the two factions clashing in the forum, where Saturninus was driven back and sought refuge in the capitol. This couldn't have been a spectacular engagement. Neither party relied on professional soldiers, and their militias weren't all that sizeable. Nevertheless, Marius' military instincts remained true. He probably raised a larger force than Saturninus had, surrounded the rebels' position and may have launched a surprise attack. After the brief clash, Saturninus' brawlers likely withdrew in the face of Marius' numerical superiority and his military cunning. Following this skirmish, they battled again, but this time it occurred at the capitol's entryway. However, it appears that Marius' effort was insufficient to ultimately dislodge the insurgents, who remained in control of the defensible position.³⁰ Therefore, Marius wisely refused to storm it again and instead, blockaded it. As in Numantia, Marius cut off the rebels' provisions, and he even severed their waterlines,³¹ although another party may have previously cut them, as one source claims. Regardless, with the rebels devoid of necessities, Marius simply waited for thirst and hunger to set in.³²

Before long, the parched insurgents realized the hopelessness of their situation and peacefully surrendered to Marius. Saturninus acted as though he genuinely lamented his actions, and the unruly tribune walked out into the forum a defeated man.³³ However, most Romans vociferously demanded the insurgents' immediate executions, but Marius prevented this from occurring. He either judiciously required some semblance of order and due process or may have merely desired to spare his recalcitrant allies' lives. Regardless of his motives, he firmly demanded that they be fairly tried in the court system. Then he housed the rebels in the Senate for safekeeping, but despite Marius'

best attempts to guard them from the raucous crowd, they were promptly massacred by an angry mob. Members of the irate rabble climbed on top of the Senate, ripped the tiles from the roof and hurled them at the insurgents. Before long, Saturninus, Glaucia and others lay dead, either in the Senate house or the forum.³⁴

This unfortunate episode marked Marius' initial fall from grace and caused the general to be publicly, albeit temporarily, despised. He had long made the aristocracy largely hostile to him by his treatment of Metellus, his denunciation of their class and his political activities. Yet, his conniving with the violent and seditious Saturninus and his delayed and lacklustre response to the revolt infuriated them as well many of the commoners. Even the equestrians who had long supported Marius were quite displeased with their one-time champion. Following the conclusion of Saturninus' revolt, Marius' popularity and support shrivelled, and his once immense political capital was considerably curtailed.³⁵

Before the Saturninus debacle, Marius had prudently decided against canvassing for another consular term for the time being. His decision wasn't motivated out of any sort of honourable and strict adherence to constitutional limitations. He had repeatedly and remorselessly violated the rules that governed consular terms, and it was clear that he was willing to selfishly circumvent certain laws when it suited him. However, after his sixth consulship, there were no major wars that required his expertise, and he had accomplished his main legislative goal, passing the land bill for his veterans. Regardless of whether he secretly desired another term or not, Marius surely realized that there was no excuse that could justify seeking the state's highest post for 99 BC, and another term may not have even been worth his trouble. When he last canvassed for the consulship, he discovered that without a looming war to influence the voters, campaigning was overly onerous. He was forced to resort to bribery, secret alliances with shady characters and admitting his soldiers into Rome to vote. Given that his victory over the Cimbri was another year removed and his popularity had waned to some extent, he probably realized that another consecutive consulship was not a realistic possibility.

As his sixth consulship ingloriously expired, the esteemed commander who once enjoyed the public's adulation was widely considered a public disgrace. Probably not long after fresh consuls were installed, Marius' resettlement laws were annulled by a vengeful

Senate. Regardless of the oath to uphold Marius' and Saturninus' agrarian statutes, the Senate deemed the legislation illegitimate because it was passed through the employment of violence and voting occurred following a thunderclap. Therefore, after an untold number of Italians and Romans were granted free land, the measure was nullified, halting any further settlement under this law, which Marius seemed to have predicted.³⁶

Over the course of the next few years, Marius' disgrace continued. Generals and politicians of Marius' stature often looked forward to serving as a censor, a prestigious post permitting the office-holder the authority to expel unfit Romans from the Senate among other duties. Marius lamentably recognized that it was highly unlikely that he could obtain the distinguished post due to his loathsome standing in Rome. He therefore resolved to support candidates who were less qualified than himself to the office to ensure that he didn't suffer a failed candidacy. An electoral loss such as this would have been a humiliating blow to his already tarnished reputation. Instead, he claimed that he had no desire to examine individuals' personal lives and offend them through the process, which was required of censors. He may have also sought a convincing excuse to be conspicuously absent from Rome in order to account for his decision to skip the censorship elections. Nevertheless, his new reality was not one of unquestioned leadership but of relative unpopularity and defending his remaining influence. While he wasn't by any means politically impotent, his prestige had considerably declined. He still remained in the Senate, but for a period, he may have been relegated to the political sidelines with only his wealth, loyal veterans, portions of the proletariat and tales of valour to sustain his limited influence. Most of the general public eventually forgave his grievous involvement with the seditious Saturninus, and Marius, in time, probably regained much of his political sway and likely assumed the career of an active and influential senator. However, it took time for his popularity to rebound, but in the meantime, moments of disgrace continued.³⁷

Unfortunately for Marius, his dishonour didn't end with his pet legislation's repeal or his forced decision to refrain from seeking the censorship. Immediately following the Saturninus episode, there was an intense chorus of calls to abolish Metellus' unjust banishment.³⁸ It appears that some of Rome's leading men strenuously pushed for Metellus' recall, but initially, they were unsuccessful.³⁹ After two years of debate and constant lobbying by Metellus' son, who was also

named Quintus Caecilius Metellus, a bill to summon the aristocrat to Rome and abrogate his exile was finally passed. Consequently, the younger Metellus was given the cognomen Pius for his humble dedication to his father.⁴⁰ Marius zealously fought the measure's passage, but to no avail. Regardless of the general's noisy objections, the assembly unanimously approved the proposal. Unable to bear witnessing Metellus' glorious return and perhaps hoping to conveniently quit the city during the censorship elections, Marius decided to depart from Rome. He cited his desire to sacrifice to the earth goddess, Cybele, in Asia Minor, and he accordingly sailed to the East. His real motivations for travelling specifically to Asia Minor were, however, far different.⁴¹

Marius understood that his return to power and popularity, and access to new sources of boundless wealth, rested with his military prowess, not his activities in Rome. In order for him to again prove his worth, enrich himself even further and regain his countrymen's favour, he needed the assembly or the Senate to appoint him to lead a great military campaign. He believed that a magnificent war would provide him with a third triumph, additional wealth and a magnificent return to prominence. Marius diligently surveyed the known world and determined that King Mithridates of Pontus fit the bill. He was a young and ambitious monarch who ruled over a wealthy kingdom, and Mithridates was clearly determined to expand his realm and was busy preparing for war. As a result, Marius identified him as a likely threat to Rome.⁴²

While Marius' departure from the eternal city was purportedly to offer sacrifices to Cybele, the real reasons were to avoid observing Metellus' joyous return and to confront Mithridates. Marius arrived in the East without any diplomatic power or official mission to justify his presence. Nonetheless, Mithridates agreed to meet with the general, likely hoping to win an ally and prove that he was amenable to Rome's desires. Marius, however, selfishly and irresponsibly wished to provoke a conflict with the ambitious king. When the two met, Mithridates treated Marius with all of the respect due to a man of his greatness, but Marius accepted his kindness with contempt. The commander bluntly explained to Mithridates, 'O king, either endeavour to be stronger than the Romans, or else quietly submit to their commands.' Mithridates must have been puzzled and perhaps even offended by Marius' tactless statement, but he later heeded his advice.⁴³

While Marius was brusquely trying his best to coerce the Pontic king into an open conflict with the Republic, Marius' long-time rival, Metellus, was returning to Rome. Metellus was always well-respected for his upstanding character and service to the state, but he was also loved because he had endured an illegitimate exile and did so with grace.⁴⁴ In 98 BC, when he returned and was reunited with his dedicated son, many cheering Romans greeted him. There were so many well-wishers hoping to welcome him that an entire day did not offer enough time for him to accept the kind words from all of those who gathered at Rome's gates.⁴⁵

As Metellus returned and Marius was in the East, the six-time consul was given a consolation prize for not seeking the censorship.⁴⁶ He was elected in *absentia* to an augurate, which meant that he was one of the senior Romans charged with interpreting the gods' wills. While it added to his already illustrious *curriculum vitae*, the prestigious position didn't compensate for Marius' dishonour.⁴⁷ Eventually, he returned to Rome even though Metellus was once again residing in the Republic's capital, but it doesn't appear that Marius' implacable foe ever resumed his former position of great influence. Nevertheless, as Metellus resumed his life in Rome, Marius constructed a new home near the forum, which was a very costly and prominent locale. However, Marius' reason for building a house there was pitiful. Throughout Marius' years of consulships and military commands, he had acquired a large client list, but only a disproportionately small number of them visited him to ask for favours or accompany him during his morning business. This vexed him, and he believed, or perhaps hoped, that the explanation for his clients' absence was because his former home was not easily accessible. He anticipated that his new villa near the forum would permit clients to effortlessly make their way to him, but he was woefully disappointed. It appears that the actual reason that many of his clients avoided him was because his once unmatched clout had waned. He had attained great power as a general, but he was quickly discarded in times of peace. While this anecdote seems to be somewhat exaggerated, given that Marius still wielded substantial influence, it demonstrates that much of his sway had indeed receded. The mighty Marius had indeed fallen from lofty heights.⁴⁸

XIV

DRUSUS

‘O my relatives and friends, will my country ever have another citizen like me?’

– *Marcus Livius Drusus*

As Marius and other Romans were searching further afield for their next adversary and the concomitant spoils and glory, they should have been more vigilant of the dangers lurking in Italy. For hundreds of years, the Republic had gradually attained regional dominance and, eventually, an overseas empire. Initially, Rome was just one city in the Italian peninsula surrounded by other towns and tribes that were not naturally cohesive or even peaceful. In fact, they were often at war with each other, but Rome gradually asserted its dominance and formed powerful partnerships with neighbouring tribes. Some peoples were more or less non-violently enlisted into an alliance with Rome, while others were dogged foes. For instance, the Samnites, located in the Italian peninsula’s more southerly regions, bitterly fought Rome but ultimately succumbed to its power. As Rome defeated their local enemies, they were coerced into becoming the Republic’s partners, which presented the newly inaugurated allies with some promising opportunities and benefits, but also a few requirements. They were compelled to cease their warring with the Republic, contribute troops to the Roman cause when requested and, in return, the growing federation protected their homeland, shared the spoils of war to some extent and virtually permitted them local autonomy. However, they were not granted Roman citizenship, and that meant that they weren’t permitted to vote in Roman elections or on bills, even if they were directly affected by them. The Roman judicial system also favoured the Romans over the allied tribes. If a dispute arose between a non-citizen and a citizen, and the evidence was scant, then the Roman courts generally defaulted on behalf of the citizen, which often bred dissatisfaction among the allies.¹

This system benefitted Rome and the allies’ wealthy classes for quite some time, and for years, there weren’t many rebellions. Unfortunately for Rome’s partners, the Republic increasingly exploited their allied agreements and abused the locals, causing a spike in bitterness towards Rome. As part of their treaties, most of the allies

were required to produce troops whenever Rome demanded them, and they were obligated to levy whatever amount was requested. Some of the more bellicose tribes assumed the most hazardous posts in battle and contributed much more than others, and combined, the allies produced more soldiers than Rome. Making matters even worse for the Italian tribes was that when they formed their respective alliances with Rome, they were presumably agreeing to provide troops for the defence of Italy, but soldiers were being levied progressively for Rome's imperial ambitions, which often resulted in protracted overseas campaigns with, at best, token compensation. However, while Rome added provinces to its domain, the Italians weren't permitted to annex any of the land that they helped conquer. All of this fomented greater discontentment.²

The poorer Italian classes bore no love for Rome. The wealthy likely didn't either, but their antipathy was tempered because they were at least profiting from their tribal partnerships with the Republic, which prevented many influential Italians from organizing revolts. To facilitate a viable uprising, the commoners needed the rich and influential to organize and lead a rebellion, and the wealthy needed the poor to be the war's dispensable fodder. Without consensus among the classes, there could be no sustainable uprising, and to satisfactorily challenge Rome's dominance, many tribes must revolt simultaneously, essentially making a successful war of independence seem unlikely from all vantage points.

The well-to-do Italians weren't often in favour of warring with Rome because they were enriched by the alliance with the Republic. They participated in banking and shipping ventures in the provinces and took advantage of the *ager publicus*, which was Roman land that had been appropriated from defeated peoples. It was rented out to farmers who tilled the property and kept the profits, even though the system governing the *ager publicus* was riddled with corruption. Nonetheless, the prosperous Italians' disdain for Rome was curbed by their steady stream of revenue that was facilitated by the burgeoning Roman empire.

The populist radical tribune, Tiberius Gracchus, inadvertently worsened the simmering discontentment among Rome's allies with his land redistribution policy of 133 BC. His measure created commissioners who divided much of the *ager publicus* and awarded it to poor Roman citizens. It is doubtful that he purposefully crafted his legislation as a slight to the wealthy Italians. As a politician who

relied on Roman rather than Italian voters, he likely wasn't too concerned whether the allies were adversely affected either, which they were. Upon his proposal's enactment, the land commissioners ejected lawful tenants from portions of the *ager publicus* and transferred the land to those who were deemed needy. Many Italians had been renting the property from Rome for years, and some even claimed to be legal owners of the land that was being allotted to the poor.

The Italians weren't given the opportunity to vote on the measure because they weren't Roman citizens, and their only available options to rectify the law's repercussions weren't ideal. When they attempted to protect their investments and property through the Gracchan land commission and Roman courts, they were often disappointed. They weren't citizens, and the rulings generally favoured the Romans. The Italians were naturally incensed, but without Roman citizenship, they had little recourse and no way to legally influence public policy from within other than to loudly complain, demand citizenship or form relationships with powerful Roman politicians. Later in 133 BC, Tiberius Gracchus was murdered at the hands of the Senate, but his controversial legislation remained in place. By 129 BC, Scipio Aemilianus, the general who razed Carthage and helped train Marius, intervened on the exasperated allies' behalf, and he and the Senate ceased the commissioners' continued attempts to redistribute agrarian land that the Italians maintained. This was a temporary victory that delayed the eventual anti-Roman sentiments from boiling over.³

The relationship between Rome and its allies ebbed and flowed for the next few years through a cycle of allied discontentment followed by brief alleviation.⁴ By 125 BC, Marcus Fulvius Flaccus, an ally of the Gracchus brothers, was elected to the consulship and relentlessly pushed for the allies' enfranchisement. He was, however, persistently frustrated at every turn. A multitude of Romans simply did not want to extend citizenship to the other tribes, for obvious reasons. The Romans didn't wish to share the bulk of the empire's benefits with all of Italy, and if they were admitted as citizens, then depending on how they were distributed among the voting blocs, the Romans would possibly be outnumbered by the would-be new citizens. Power would no longer rest with Romans but with non-Romans, but there was an incentive for certain politicians to advocate for enfranchisement. Whoever granted the allies citizenship would likely obtain their unwavering allegiance and accompanying influence, which would

have been immense given the tribes' large populations. Nonetheless, the Senate incessantly stymied Flaccus' enfranchisement proposal until many senators finally tired of his never-ending antics. In turn, they assigned him to lead a military command outside of Rome to remove him from the capital and postpone his attempts to grant the Italians citizenship.⁵

Tiberius Gracchus' younger brother, Gaius, was elected to the tribuneship in late 124 BC, and like Flaccus, he attempted to extend citizenship to the allies. However, his measure was quickly and resoundingly rejected. Within a short period of time, the Italians had found two sympathetic politicians and were given a glimmer of hope, only to have their goal denied. Gaius Gracchus moved on with the remainder of his agenda and was able to pass a bill transferring much of Rome's judicial powers from the senatorial class to the equestrians. At first, this legislation seemed innocuous to the allies, but essentially, it helped unify the equestrians into a more-or-less cohesive order of citizens. The new-found influence and judicial powers permitted them to expand their business ventures and encroach on the allies' provincial interests, costing them hefty profits and further inflaming the Italians.

By Marius' troubled sixth consulship in 100 BC, the relationship between Rome and the allies was sour but not beyond repair. Marius' and Saturninus' land bill was favourable to the Italians, which likely temporarily mollified them to some extent, but after its passage and ultimate abrogation, their dissatisfaction quickly resumed. From 100 BC onward, they frequently and very publicly displayed their unhappiness and desire for citizenship through various demonstrations in Rome. These protests quickly escalated and became so bothersome that the Romans began exploring ways to prohibit them. As a result, in 95 BC, a measure was ratified that essentially expelled many of the non-citizen malcontents from Rome. This surely lessened the demonstrations in the capital, but it sent the mischief's organizers to their respective homes, where they fomented additional anti-Roman sentiments among their own people.⁶

The ancient sources don't report on Marius' views on enfranchisement or even his involvement as a senator during the multiple proposals. He certainly awarded some of his Italian veterans with citizenship illegally, and in a largely abortive attempt, he sought to create colonies for the Italians and extend citizenship to a negligible number of the settlers. Regardless, these isolated actions do not

necessarily prove that he supported wholesale enfranchisement, and neither do his political leanings. Marius was mostly considered a *populares*, even though he sometimes sided with the *optimates*, and it was *populares* politicians who often proposed citizenship legislation. However, the bulk of the *populares* voters were far from being unified in support of enfranchisement. Given that Marius sometimes acted as a political maverick and no Roman voting faction was united in its opinion of enfranchisement, it is impossible to determine Marius' true feelings based upon his political inclinations. Yet, later in Marius' career, he did accede to some of the allies' demands, but likely not out of idealism, only to gain an ally. Towards the end of his life, he also backed at least one politician who publicly supported legislation that created a more equitable system for the Italians, but that does not prove that Marius supported the Italians' enfranchisement either.

It is highly probable that Marius was sympathetic to the Italians, given that he was also an Italian who was born in a community that was only awarded citizenship in 188 BC. If Arpinum's inhabitants hadn't been enfranchised, then Marius would never have become a legendary general and statesman, and he surely recognized that fact. Yet, many Roman equestrians and Italians were at odds with one another and had competing aims, which placed Marius in an awkward position since he wielded support from both constituencies. He probably adroitly avoided the question whenever possible. He likely preferred the status quo rather than upsetting the current Roman citizens, but he might have been willing to advocate for wholesale enfranchisement under certain circumstances. If he were the one to accomplish the feat, then he would be provided with an enormous population of new supporters. Marius was a politician whose views were presumably fluid to some degree. Whether or not he could personally benefit from a bill's enactment and how much he could gain from its passage might have been the deciding factor that determined if he would have supported an enfranchisement proposal, but that is purely speculative. There is simply no evidence to suggest that he was actively interested in supporting such a measure during his spate of consulships ending in 100 BC or during most of his senatorial career.

By late 92 BC, Marius' popularity had probably rebounded to a large degree, and he likely exerted considerable influence as a respected elder statesman. He wasn't the dominant force in politics that he once was, but he was certainly a member of a small cadre of

elite powerbrokers. However, another politician named Marcus Livius Drusus rose to power at the time and ultimately altered Rome's history.⁷ He was a silver-tongued and widely considered honourable nobleman who was elected to the tribunate. He was the son of a former consul and censor also named Marcus Livius Drusus, who was a senatorial stalwart. Upon the younger Drusus' election, the tribune proposed an extremely ambitious programme to award nearly every stakeholder something that they desired, but at a cost. To win over the Senate, he proposed transferring considerable judicial power back to them.⁸ To placate the equestrians who would lose judicial power, he suggested that 300 members of their class should be added to the senatorial order to replenish the Senate's dwindling numbers. He additionally proposed freely awarding more agrarian land to the poor, largely at the expense of some of Rome's allies. There was also a provision that aimed to modify the subsidized grain programme, likely to benefit poor Romans, but it also negatively affected many of Rome's tribal partners who tilled the land where many grain fields lay. Drusus hoped that the land and grain proposals would win him the commoners' support, at least enough for his final proposal. He intended pushing to acquire citizenship for Rome's allies, which he believed would compensate for the grain and agrarian laws that largely came at their expense. However, it is unclear as to whether Drusus had planned all along to propose allied citizenship or whether it was an improvisation that he introduced out of fear of the Italians at the last minute.⁹ Whatever the case, the Italians allegedly swore an oath of allegiance to Drusus if he were to secure their citizenship, which would have made him one of the most powerful men in Rome.¹⁰

His controversial agenda was bold and impressive if it succeeded. He meticulously designed the package to hopefully content every party just enough to persuade them to yield some of their other privileges to ensure his entire programme's enactment. If he was able to facilitate his agenda's passage, then he, of course, thought his popularity would surge, and he'd enjoy the loyalty of the new majority, the allies. Unfortunately for Drusus, his plan was plagued with flaws. Transferring judicial power and assigning equestrians to the Senate infuriated both the Senate and the equestrians. The Senate wasn't pleased about admitting what was essentially an equal number of equestrians to their order, which would have diminished their influence. The equestrians weren't thrilled about losing their judicial power, and the provision granting 300 equestrians senatorial

membership complicated the matter even further. It caused dissension among their own class because it pitted them against each other in competition for the Senate assignments, which caused their order to be reticent of Drusus' measure.

The proletariat was surely pleased by the prospect of free land and an even more favourable grain law, but much of the Senate mostly disapproved of the proposals, as they did with many other populist measures. The allies weren't supportive of them either, since much of it came at their land's expense. Apparently, it disproportionately affected some allies more unfavourably than others. The Etruscans and Umbrians were peoples from the central to northern parts of the Italian peninsula, and they were incredibly concerned about Drusus' land and grain proposals because they would seriously impact their land and earnings. Contrary to Drusus' intention, they weren't remotely placated by the prospect of citizenship because, unlike the other allies, they hadn't been treated so unfairly that they believed they needed citizenship to fight Roman injustices in the courts. There were other outspoken allies who demanded citizenship but also protested the grain and agrarian provisions. Meanwhile, a large number of Romans staunchly opposed enfranchisement because the new citizens would be able to outvote them. Drusus must have believed that his agenda was an act of unrivalled brilliance, but it was, in fact, doomed from the start because it was fraught with glaring pitfalls and deficiencies.¹¹

Allegedly, leading up to the vote on Drusus' programme, ominous signs were noticed throughout Rome's realm, portending a perilous future, which caused great apprehension through the land. One morning, a glowing orb gleamed in the north and was followed by a loud crack, likened to thunder. On another occasion, a few Romans spied a golden sphere descending into the earth, where it grew in size, again took flight and eclipsed the sun temporarily. Purportedly, stones and brick fragments destructively rained down for seven consecutive days, adding to the Romans' considerable anxiety. The Samnites noticed a fiery geyser spew from the earth unexpectedly, and the display left the onlookers thoroughly shocked. The inhabitants of Arretium, modern-day Arezzo, observed blood running out of loaves of bread, which generated a very disturbing spectacle. These natural or supernatural phenomena frightened those in the Italian peninsula, who were understandably concerned about their communities' futures. Likewise, these terrifying prodigies startled Drusus, but he daringly

resolved to move forward with his proposals anyway.¹²

As the assembly slowly convened to vote on portions of Drusus' agenda, many, possibly armed, allies descended upon Rome to voice their opinion and observe the votes, despite the law banning many of them from entering the city.¹³ Others gathered in Rome for more nefarious purposes. Allegedly, a group of Etruscans and Umbrians planned on maliciously murdering Drusus because of his agrarian and grain provisions, but he somehow learned of their scheme and prepared accordingly, which likely saved his life temporarily. At first, Drusus' contentious programme, *sans* the enfranchisement proposal, was passed, to the allies' disdain and the commoners' pleasure. Nonetheless, a sizeable cadre of powerful Romans unified against Drusus because they thoroughly opposed the sum of his agenda's proposals, and they successfully schemed to hinder his gains.¹⁴ Consequently, the citizenship proposal was blocked, and the Senate unilaterally nullified his entire programme, including the land and grain bills, which had already passed.¹⁵ This pleased the Etruscans and Umbrians, who happily departed for their homeland. However, the remaining Italians, including the Marsi, lingered, hoping to salvage the situation and somehow obtain citizenship.¹⁶ Meanwhile, others considered deviously assassinating the Roman consuls to achieve their goal of enfranchisement.¹⁷

On a subsequent evening in 91 BC, before matters were finally settled, Drusus was speaking to a crowd in front of his home, but when he politely sent them on their way, disaster struck. As Drusus lingered just outside the safety of his house, one of the disgruntled attendees rushed towards the tribune and stabbed him in the hip with a shoemaker's knife. The unidentified assailant fled, leaving the weapon behind, and was never apprehended. Considering that Drusus had generated enemies from every constituency, the assault shouldn't have been viewed as much of a surprise, but the killer's individual motives aren't known. Nevertheless, the clumsy assault was sufficient to fulfill its sinister purpose. As Drusus gradually drifted into unconsciousness and struggled to communicate with his attendants, he uttered his last words in the form of a vain question, 'O my relatives and friends, will my country ever have another citizen like me?' Mere hours after the attack, he perished.¹⁸

Not long after Drusus' death, another tribune named Quintus Varius was persuaded by the equestrians to introduce a bill outlawing allied citizenship proposals altogether. The equestrians benefitted

from the Italians' non-citizen status. They were fully aware that if the allies were enfranchised, then they would be allowed to use the full force of Roman law to defend their interests against the equestrians' repeated abuses, which would clearly be counterproductive for a number of Roman businessmen. Nevertheless, when Varius formally proposed his measure, the other tribunes were unified against him and attempted to veto his bill. However, armed equestrians quickly surrounded them with weapons drawn, and as a result, the proposal was passed into law through threat of violence.

Without a champion to carry the enfranchisement measure or a legal method to permit its debate, the allies were without recourse, but Drusus' murder was the final straw in their minds. Roman law was biased against them, and they weren't permitted to lawfully balance it. Finally, both the rich and poor Italians were equally discontented and bitterly aligned against Rome, but it took Drusus' death to serve as a conduit to their final solution. They determined that a revolt was their only answer. As the disappointed Italians returned home, they began covertly plotting with the other Roman 'allies' to prepare for a war of independence. A federation of would-be rebels quickly formed in relative secrecy, and the different factions exchanged hostages to ensure their loyalties.¹⁹

It didn't take long for Rome to hear whispers of the coming insurrection, and the Senate dispatched operatives to investigate the situation's seriousness in cities whose allegiance was questionable. Shortly thereafter, a Roman informant witnessed a hostage exchange between disgruntled allies in the town of Asculum, which is around 130 miles north-east of Rome, and he swiftly reported it to the proper authorities. In response, a praetor named Servilius promptly travelled to Asculum and openly berated its citizens for their shocking disloyalty and sedition. The townsfolk believed that the Italians' entire rebellious plan had been discovered, and consequently, they executed Servilius and his subordinate, who was named Fonteius. Then they treacherously massacred the entire Roman population within their city by slitting their throats and stole their property.²⁰

Before long, a large league of former allies consisting of much of the Italian peninsula declared war on Rome. The Marsi, Peligni, Vestini, Marrucini, Picentines, Frentani, Hirpini, Pompeians, Venusini, Apulians, Lucanians, Samnites and other tribes predominantly extending through large portions of central and southern Italy united against the Republic. However, some of the

Italians hoped to avoid war if possible, even into the eleventh hour. They dispatched conciliatory envoys to Rome to explain that they had long meekly obeyed Rome's demands, and they only desired citizenship. The Senate sharply explained that if they wished to plead for forgiveness, then they would consider listening. Otherwise, the emissaries should be gone and not return. For all of Rome's greatness and expanding borders, its leaders failed to satisfactorily detect and respond to the simmering threat at home. By late 91 BC, Rome faced war with its allies, who threatened the Republic's very existence, but it was an entirely avoidable and utterly needless conflict. Nevertheless, Rome quickly discovered that the war's nature was much different than expected. Many of Rome's previous wars were against under-disciplined and poorly trained barbarians led by sub-par or just inexperienced generals, barring some very notable exceptions.²¹ However, the looming conflict pitted the Republic's armies against troops trained in Roman warfare and able generals who had successfully fought alongside the legions. Many of the rebels may have even served under Marius in his previous campaigns. At the outset of the war, the allies seemed nearly equal to Rome in leadership and soldiers. At last, the Republic finally needed the discarded and ageing general Marius.²²

SOCII

'In this war, which proved of the greatest moment and most varied fortunes, and brought innumerable mischiefs and the gravest perils upon the Romans ...'

– *Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus*

Rome's war against its neighbouring tribes became known as the Social War because it pitted many of its Italian allies, called the *socii*, against the Republic. At the outbreak of the conflict in 91 BC, Rome was in an unenviable position. While the Republic was not prepared for a large-scale war near its capital, the allies had diligently planned and organized their rebellion before they revolted at Asculum. Rome had suspected seditious communications among certain disgruntled allies and perhaps a few small-scale insurrections, but it wasn't prepared for what the Social War became. The Italians had largely surprised the Romans. The former allies had previously been preparing for war in a time when Rome had no professional standing armies. The Republic levied troops on an *ad hoc* basis, but it took precious time to mobilize a large force. Even when a legion was raised, the soldiers were still, for the most part, raw recruits who frequently had little or no military training. Many months were often necessary to satisfactorily train and drill inexperienced legionaries before they were reliable. As a result, Rome was at a distinct disadvantage, and considering the breadth of the revolt and that the Romans observed much of Italy turn from friend to foe seemingly overnight, they must have been terrified. Adding to the Romans' growing apprehension was the fact that during the early days of the Social War, they were unsure which of their allies could be trusted to remain loyal to their alliance throughout the looming conflict.¹

The rebellious Italians continued their mobilization throughout the winter of 91 BC and into early 90 BC, and they formed a new power structure in Italy. Two dominant peoples were the revolt's primary partners, the Marsi in central Italy and the more southerly Samnites. Each led a different faction and remained the principal power in their respective regions. It appears that their objective was quite simple: to gain their unfettered independence from Rome, using brute force if necessary. To achieve this goal, they raised a tremendous force,

totalling 100,000 soldiers or more. Suddenly, there was an enormous hostile army not only in Rome's sphere of influence but in its backyard. Rome was stunned, but the Republic's outlook wasn't entirely hopeless. The Romans responded with haste and levied a force that was similar in size, and for the time being, it seemed that many of Rome's allies in Latium, Etruria, Campania, Umbria, Cisalpine Gaul and the extreme south of Italy stayed true to the Republic. Yet, Rome wasn't assured of their continued loyalty, which must have been distressing.²

The consuls for 90 BC were Publius Rutilius Lupus and Lucius Julius Caesar, a relative of the now famous Gaius Julius Caesar. These men had climbed the *cursus honorum* and were expected to lead Rome's legions against the malcontented Italians. However, Rome quickly grasped the war's complicated nature and learned of the opposition's skilled generals. Therefore, the Republic's most able military commanders were summoned and assigned to serve as the consuls' deputies to compensate for the Italians' preparations and the consuls' insufficient experience.

Marius was asked to join Consul Lupus' staff to offer his counsel and assume a field command along with other seasoned military men of the day, including Gnaeus Pompeius, Quintus Caepio and Gaius Perpenna. Finally, Romans once again desperately needed the expertise of the famed commander, Marius, and as they pled for his assistance, it must have briefly satisfied the resentful general's inflated ego. Nevertheless, following their entreaties, he eagerly and delightfully agreed to assist Lupus. Another corps of seasoned commanders, including Marius' former antagonistic deputy, Lucius Cornelius Sulla, was tasked with serving Lupus' consular colleague, Caesar. Rome's goal was to quickly stamp out the revolt, reassert its dominance and force the rebels back into an alliance. To meet these ends, the Italian peninsula was divided among the Roman generals, with the consuls overseeing the operations and commanding the legions. Lupus and his men predominantly focused on the Italian peoples known as the Marsi and their allies, while Caesar primarily concentrated on the Samnites' faction.

The first violence occurred in 91 BC at Asculum, but the Social War didn't break out in earnest until the following year. When the fighting erupted, Rome was frequently on the losing side. One of the earliest notable battles featured the Roman commander Gnaeus Pompeius, who suffered a swift defeat at the hands of the Marsian alliance.

Following his loss, the rebel army quickly pursued him, and he withdrew to the town of Firmum, a city near the Adriatic Coast, where he and his army took refuge and impatiently waited to be rescued.

Rome was treated to yet another disastrous battle. This time it involved the Roman general Perpenna. He was leading troops presumably against a Marsian alliance contingent, which was under the command of Publius Presentaeus. Details of the actual battle are scarce, but the result was utterly devastating. Perpenna was handily defeated, and only 6,000 of his 10,000-man army survived the battle. Four thousand Romans were killed in a single conflict, and the enemy captured a large portion of their supplies. Needless to say, Consul Lupus was furious with Perpenna and lost all confidence in him as a general. As a result, he was stripped of his command, and his remaining men were incorporated into Marius' legions. Marius' military reputation alone must have instilled great confidence, and his role in the war and the size of his army was very quickly increasing as his colleagues met numerous embarrassing setbacks of varying degrees.³

The war effort clearly hadn't started well for the Romans, but worse news was yet to come. At some point early in the campaign, Marius and Lupus rendezvoused somewhere on the Tolenus River, which snaked through central Italy. Across the waterway, a rebel Marsian army commanded by Vettius Scato awaited. In private, Marius had repeatedly attempted to persuade Lupus to delay his war effort because he believed that their soldiers were simply too inexperienced and needed drilling before they could adequately defend Rome. To engage in battle at this juncture, Marius suggested, would risk disaster. Lupus was sceptical of Marius and shrugged him off multiple times, believing that he was driven by ulterior motives. After ignoring Marius' sound advice, he heedlessly decided to confront the enemy and ordered Marius to assist him in the risky endeavour. Therefore, the Roman generals constructed two parallel bridges across the river so that they could both pass over and, if necessary, attack their adversary from different points.⁴

Bridge-building in the ancient world was no easy feat, especially considering that Lupus' and Marius' troops were likely harried by missiles launched by the enemy during the construction effort. Using only crude tools, trees from the nearby forests and the muscle of thousands of soldiers working in unison, the bridges were erected, clearing a perilous path to the enemy. The rebel commander, Scato,

encamped his army closest to Marius while laying traps near Lupus' passage in case he chose to traverse the river, which he ultimately did. Lupus marched his troops towards Scato, who at first purposefully allowed the consul to cross mostly unmolested, but as Lupus' troops arrived on the opposing riverbank, Scato unleashed his vicious ambush against the unsuspecting Lupus. The Romans had apparently walked directly into Scato's trap. They were exposed and largely unprepared for fierce combat, and Scato's men systematically began cutting them down. Much of the consul's army was slaughtered, including Lupus himself, who suffered a fatal head injury from a projectile. It's quite clear that the consul would have been wise to heed Marius' expert advice.

Battlefield communication in ancient wars was limited to say the least. Generals relied on signals from a distance or horsemen to deliver messages, which seriously impeded intelligence sharing. Deficient planning on behalf of Lupus and poor communications must have influenced the battle's disastrous outcome. Lupus either crossed the bridge without notifying Marius, which seems unlikely, failed to expeditiously dispatch messengers to inform Marius of his perilous situation, or Scato quickly detected and foiled Lupus' inadequate battle plan. Whatever the case, the veteran general was parked downriver from Lupus' encampment, and he received a message of sorts and realized that something was amiss when mutilated Roman corpses were observed floating past his camp.⁵

Marius quickly mobilized his troops and ordered them to march across the bridge to meet the enemy and come to the consul's aid. Immediately, they fought a smaller force left behind by Scato, presumably to guard their camp and prevent Marius from crossing the bridge. Marius defeated the rebel contingent defending the bivouac, rushed to the aid of Lupus' men, killed 8,000 Italians in total and seized Scato's encampment and supplies. Marius remained in firm control of the enemy's bivouac, which apparently provided Lupus' survivors and Marius' troops with refuge. Marius' decisive and bold action clearly averted a Roman catastrophe, but it seems that he didn't attempt to provoke a full-scale battle with Scato after their first engagement, which many ancient pundits likely thought proved the old general's timidity. However, not attacking at this point was probably a sound decision. His troops and Lupus' survivors must have been absolutely demoralized after suffering, or at least observing, an embarrassing defeat, which left 8,000 Romans dead, including their

consul. The nature of Marius' army is unclear, but given that Marius requested to train them before engaging the enemy, it seems more than likely that it wasn't comprised of battle-hardened troops. They were probably raw recruits with minimal training and little experience. To risk battle at this point without overwhelmingly advantageous odds would have been an unnecessary gamble. Moreover, Marius had won a tactical victory. He had captured the enemy's camp and supplies, and he safely held a fortified position. If Scato's troops planned on continuing their campaign, then they either had to retreat to restock or attempt to retake their bivouac on an empty stomach against a fortified Marian army. Marius knew that war was a marathon, not a sprint, and he understood that it was better to wait for the enemy to attack from a position of weakness rather than on equal footing.⁶

Quite possibly following this battle or perhaps another engagement, a commander from the Marsian coalition sent a communication to Marius. It was a vain attempt to coax the old general into discarding his advantageous position and into battle. In the missive, the rebel general sharply quipped, 'If thou art a great general, Marius, come down and fight it out with us.' The former consul was not about to be drawn into a hazardous conflict over his pride. Instead, he responded with determination and exclaimed, 'If thou art a great general, force me to fight it out with you against my will.' Regardless of the rebel's taunts, Marius adroitly refused to risk battle unnecessarily and ignored the Italian's gibes.⁷

The night after the battle at the Tolenus River, Scato's bruised army was without a camp. Consequently, they were compelled to sleep on a battlefield that was polluted with death's detritus, and the next day, the rebel general ultimately conceded a defeat of sorts. His men were hungry and without provisions, but Marius maintained a favourable position, which happened to be their bivouac. Instead of needlessly chancing a rout, Scato wisely retreated to replenish his supplies and aimed to live to fight another day.⁸

As the rebels withdrew, thousands of lifeless legionaries still littered the battlefield. The common soldiers' remains were likely cremated and/or buried near the battle site in large pits, presumably dug by the surviving troops.⁹ This wasn't done out of disrespect. Romans considered it incredibly profane to leave a body unburied. It was an insult that they believed reverberated even into the afterlife. To bury them was, in fact, a sign of respect that prevented eternal

pain. Marius' soldiers simply didn't have the time to carefully bury them individually. Nevertheless, being interred into a hastily prepared grave didn't necessarily cause any unfortunate ramifications in the spirit world, according to the Romans.¹⁰

It appears that Marius or some of his subordinates collected the deceased patricians and other aristocrats, including the slain consul, who were all transported to Rome to receive the proper family burials. This was done out of deference for the aristocracy and the office of the consulship, but there were unintended consequences. After they were delivered and the city viewed the dead bodies, Rome spent days in mourning, and the Senate worried that this would inhibit their legionary recruitment drives. In response, the Senate voted that any Roman – patrician or plebeian – killed during the conflict, must be buried near the battlefield to avoid demoralizing spectacles near Rome.

Upon Lupus' sombre arrival in Rome for burial, the Senate was presented with another problem. The constitution required that two consuls serve concurrently. Consuls, like many other posts, were elected positions, but they presided over such elections. The only living consul, Caesar, was mired in a war for Rome's survival and simply could not abandon his post to oversee a special election. Consequently, the Senate decided that for the remainder of the year, unless the situation resolved itself quickly, they would forego electing a suffect consul, and they would proceed with only one executive officer. The Senate then appointed Marius and Quintus Caepio to resume Lupus' consular military command, which augmented Marius' growing ranks and expanded his wartime role even further. However, it seems strange that Marius wasn't allowed to inherit Lupus' entire command, considering his experience and competent service in the Social War. After all, Marius' counter-attack during the battle at the Tolenus River was Rome's only productive engagement thus far. The likely reason that Lupus' army and authority was split between Marius and Caepio was that most of the Senate still particularly disliked and distrusted Marius. They probably feared that a large military command might permit the great general to return to power and once again challenge the aristocrats' influence.¹¹

Not long after Marius and Caepio were endowed with the remnants of Lupus' command, the Senate received some welcome news. A Roman general named Sulpicius inflicted a painful defeat on a member of the Marsian coalition. At this point in the war, victories

were few and far between, and like any ambitious Roman, Caepio probably wanted to safeguard his homeland, score a major victory and also receive the concomitant honours.¹² Unfortunately, Caepio happened to be too trusting of a leader. A Marsian general named Poppaediū apparently appeared to defect to Caepio's camp and asked to join the Roman cause. To provide proof of his good intentions, he delivered his two infant children as hostages as well as a great bounty of gold and silver to Caepio. Poppaediū explained that without his guidance, his rebel army was leaderless and would fall easily to the Roman forces. Caepio impetuously concurred, and naively using Poppaediū as his guide, he set out with his forces to score an easy victory against the vulnerable horde. However, Caepio had been deceived. The children supplied to the Roman were the progeny of slaves and the booty was lead painted with gold and silver. Unknowingly, the gullible Caepio walked into a trap. When Poppaediū gave the signal, his army ambushed Caepio and his legionaries, killing the general and the majority of his army. Once again, a Roman commander had suffered a humiliating defeat and been killed in action. Following the debacle, the Senate begrudgingly transferred the remainder of his beleaguered army to Marius. After consolidating the armies, Marius commanded a larger force and wielded even more influence over the war's operations. As he assumed much of the deceased Lupus' power, he essentially held the military authority of a consul in the field, with only Caesar being his nominal senior.¹³

As the war dragged on, Marius was presented with another chance to exact a severe blow against the Marsian alliance, but again, the ancient sources fail to provide a location or a date. Regardless of the absent details, the veteran general felt assured of victory against a rebel horde who must have either been inferior in numbers or at least in possession of a less than favourable position. With the two armies facing one another in anxious anticipation, Marius sensed a victory. The seasoned commander ordered his troops to charge the vulnerable Italian army, but they adamantly refused to obey his command out of fear, which infuriated Marius. After the two armies awkwardly gazed across the would-be battlefield and shamefully failed to engage, they ultimately withdrew to safety without confronting each other. Following the episode, Marius convened his soldiers and explained his disgust. 'It is no small question whether I should call the enemies or you the greater cowards,' the former consul declared, 'for neither did they dare face your backs, nor you to confront theirs.' The legionaries

had disappointed their general, missed an opportunity to slay their enemy and failed their fellow countrymen.¹⁴

Eventually, circumstances reunited Marius and his old protégé, Sulla, even though Sulla was assigned to Caesar, who was focused primarily on the conflict's southern theatre. Nevertheless, Marius and Sulla cooperated for their common cause to confront a nearby Marsian army. When the two Romans marshalled their forces, the rebels launched an assault against them, but the seasoned generals sprung into action, ordered a stout counter-attack and quickly and overwhelmingly routed the enemy. The rebels withdrew and frantically climbed the walls protecting the local vineyards to seek sanctuary, but many were struck down as they retreated from the Romans who vigorously stalked them. With the enemy holed up in the vineyard, Marius' and Sulla's forces occupied opposite positions around the defeated rebel army to prevent their escape. In an act of desperation, the Marsians attempted to breakout, but they were intercepted by Sulla's waiting troops and were slaughtered. More than 6,000 rebels died that day at the hands of Marius and Sulla, and they captured 7,000 others.¹⁵

After the battle, Marius and Sulla parted ways and the war carried on. Soon thereafter, Marius was presented with another chance to vanquish an enemy army. After likely observing a weakness in the opposing force, Marius advanced his legions into an open plain to offer battle, and the rebel commander, Poppaedius, likewise marched his troops to meet him. As the two armies sternly eyed one another, the menacing stares slowly melted away as the soldiers recognized friends and acquaintances in the opposing armies' ranks. The mutual disdain instantly transformed into hope for a peaceful resolution. The legionaries shouted their salutations and exchanged well wishes, and some of the soldiery even mingled with their foes and traded warm embraces. Upon observing the extraordinary spectacle, Marius slowly strode into no man's land and awaited the rebel general, who soon met him there. The two commanders discussed their desire to end the senseless conflict and once again be brothers in arms rather than enemies. Both armies and generals were filled with hope that an accord could be reached, but unfortunately, peace was not obtained through these talks. Nevertheless, the armies parted without bloodshed.¹⁶

Towards the end of 90 BC, the Marsian campaign appeared much less bleak. Pompeius, who had been blockaded in Firmum, was able to

escape with the help of the Roman commander, Sulpicius. Consequently, the two were able to inflict a resounding defeat against their enemies. Sextus Julius Caesar, another Roman general, also scored a win over the rebels and killed 8,000 of them. Between the late Roman surge and Marius' steady and competent leadership, the Marsian front began to stabilize and clearly favour the Romans.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the war's front in and near Samnite country throughout 90 BC was an unadulterated disaster. It was led by Consul Julius Caesar, who was a poor commander. Early in the campaign, he suffered a defeat at the hands of Vettius Scato, which may have been severe enough to force him to raise an entirely new army.¹⁸ In the meantime, the Samnite alliance poured through the countryside, captured pro-Roman cities and induced defections. Caesar realized that the situation was quickly spiralling out of control, and he needed to act with haste. Therefore, he marched to relieve the besieged proRoman city of Acerrae, hoping to save the city and inflict a terrible defeat against his foes. When he arrived, he zealously attacked the enemy army, which was led by a general named Papius, and killed 6,000 of his men, but the victory was hardly a turning point in the ongoing war. Regardless, for the time being, Caesar had safeguarded Acerrae and sent the enemy to flight.

Caesar's participation in the Social War hadn't been storied up to this point, but he had earned at least one notable victory. However, things took a catastrophic turn for the worse. When he was marching his army of approximately 35,000 soldiers, including cavalry, through a narrow rocky pass, he was ambushed by an enemy general named Marius Egnatius. Caesar's army was devastated, losing more than half of its soldiers, equipment and provisions. The survivors took refuge in the city of Teanum, modern-day Teano, which is north of Naples. As the campaign season drew to a close, Rome was desperate for a victory in the southern theatre, but Caesar and his deputies had little to show other than mostly losses. Unfortunately for Rome, there was little reason for optimism.¹⁹

As discouraging reports were flowing into Rome from the Samnite and Marsian fronts, danger emerged from yet another theatre. It appeared that some of the Republic's closest allies were reconsidering their allegiance to Rome. In fact, segments of a few tribes, including the Etruscans and Umbrians, may have even turned to open rebellion against the Republic. The situation had become nearly untenable. The conflict's devastating results and the possibility of fresh revolts meant

that Rome needed more legionaries fast, but because of the military's property requirements, the Republic lacked the necessary manpower. In response, the Senate began admitting former slaves, known as freedmen, into the army. During the Jugurthine War, Marius had also enrolled men into the legions regardless of wealth requirements. The Senate had originally permitted Marius' recruiting tactics in a vain hope that it would lead to his failure, but by 90 BC, the Senate began employing the same methods to save the Republic. Around this time, the Senate also begrudgingly approved a measure which called into question the entire war. Worried that their loyal allies might falter and turn against Rome, the Senate granted full citizenship to their faithful partners and, at some point, to the rebels who quickly surrendered. The ancient historian, Appian, believed that this encouraged the devoted peoples to become even more loyal while at the same time tempting those cities who weren't fanatical rebels to side with the Republic. He also asserted that it softened some of Rome's most steadfast opponents because they believed that they might still be able to obtain citizenship. Nevertheless, the enfranchisement decree had the desired effect, and Rome's closest allies decided to remain mostly loyal.²⁰

While the new citizens were pleasantly excited about their newfound rights and privileges, they failed to notice or possibly didn't care that their votes bordered on the meaningless. The Senate engineered legislation that enrolled the new citizens into ten newly created voting tribes, bringing the total to forty-five. The newest ten tribes were required to vote last, which meant that they wouldn't vote at all if a majority of all of the tribes had already been reached before they had the chance to cast their ballots. Moreover, the forty-five tribes were additionally divided inequitably, which devalued the Italians' votes even further. Regardless, the newly admitted Italians were simply content with being Roman citizens for the time being.²¹

Following the senatorial decrees, fresh elections were held and new consuls were installed in 89 BC. Gnaeus Pompeius and Lucius Porcius Cato were chosen as the new consuls, but another decision around this point was the most baffling. Marius, who longed for nothing more than to once again prosecute a glorious war and win Rome's love, resigned from his post. He claimed that health issues prevented him from sufficiently fulfilling his appointment, but no specific details were provided. However, it seems improbable that he retired due to infirmities. In fact, it is more than likely that he cited illness or old age

as the cause of his retirement merely as an excuse to mask the real reason.²²

There are several scenarios that may explain Marius' puzzling decision. He was in his mid to late sixties at the time, which was a ripe old age in antiquity. Consequently, it is entirely possible that he was afflicted with an illness, but his later years proved that he wasn't overly hindered by an ailment. Perhaps, he eventually overcame the malady, but service to the state often came before health in ancient Rome. At least one other Roman general, Sextus Julius Caesar, had carried on during the Social War despite an illness so grave that he died while on campaign.²³ Prosecuting a war while suffering from an affliction certainly was an arduous task, but Marius was also known for his affinity for austere and even harsh living conditions earlier in his life. One ancient author even admitted that if Marius was indeed suffering, then he served beyond what could be expected of an ailing man. All of which casts doubt on the claim that he retired due to health concerns.²⁴

There is also the possibility that he grew weary of fighting his fellow Italians. However, considering that he had already slain thousands of rebels and his willingness to remorselessly inflict violence upon his fellow Romans later in life, this is probably not the catalyst for his retirement. There are still other potential causes of his resignation. It is not impossible that Marius decided to retire because of his soldiers' pusillanimity. He could have been so disgusted with their cowardice that he refused to lead them any more, but this assertion is also suspect. Marius keenly understood that his soldiers simply needed thorough training and combat experience, something that he had been preaching all along. He must have expected poor discipline from an untrained army, but this problem could easily be rectified in time.

It is certainly conceivable that following the consular elections, he was facing an effective demotion. Marius had essentially assumed the military command of a consul, but with two new incoming consuls, he was no longer needed in that capacity. It's not beyond the realm of possibility that instead of being publicly demoted to the level of a consul's deputy, he chose to resign and cite his health as the impetus. Yet, his dogged determination and untiring obsession with once again commanding legions and returning to prominence likely would have prevented this scenario.

Marius could well have faced being removed from his post

altogether for a variety of reasons. The Senate may have questioned Marius' dedication, given that he was sympathetic to the Italians and had an overly friendly encounter with Poppaedi. This doesn't seem like a well-founded concern, considering that Marius' patriotism was unquestioned and he had commendably served in the Social War. The most probable impetus of his resignation was because his senatorial enemies wished to deny him a chance to restore and augment his reputation. Once the war seemed to be progressing in Rome's favour on the Marsian front, the Senate may have decided that Marius was no longer necessary to win the conflict. When they arrived at this decision, they likely sought the first opportunity to thanklessly strip Marius of his command in order to prevent his return to glory through spectacular military successes. The old general had no shortage of political foes, and as soon as they believed that they could safely remove him without harming the war effort, they certainly would have seized it. Marius may have been wise to their plans or they may have offered him a face-saving deal: retire and claim infirmities. Whatever the case, it seems implausible that he was so concerned with his health that he retired and relinquished two of the things that he loved most: war and power. More than likely, he resigned to preserve his remaining dignity instead of it being humiliatingly terminated altogether. So, Marius gracefully bowed out and resumed the life of a respected statesman and former military man.

With or without Marius, the Social War continued. It appears that the two incoming consuls both primarily focused on the Marsian theatre, while Sulla and other deputies were dispatched to confront the Samnite alliance.²⁵ The Marsian campaign season started off quite well for the Romans, as Pompeius, Cato and their subordinates enjoyed a fair amount of success. However, the exuberance caused by their early victories was short-lived because Pompeius' consular colleague, Cato, fell in combat with the Marsians. Cato led his legionaries into battle at Lake Facinus, a lake in central Italy that was drained in the 1800s. Before the armies clashed, Cato made an ill-advised public statement, claiming that Marius' accomplishments paled in comparison to his own. Marius the Younger was one of Cato's subordinates, and this objectively false statement understandably enraged him. According to one tradition, when the battle at Lake Facinus commenced, Marius the Younger killed Cato in revenge, and the leaderless Romans eventually retreated from the battlefield. However, this tale should be viewed with some scepticism, considering that none of the other sources mention the assassination.

Nevertheless, even though losing a consul was a devastating emotional blow, it was more or less a minor setback for the Romans. Pompeius and his lieutenants continued pressing the Marsi and their allies, and they inflicted calamitous defeats against the Marsian coalition. By the end of 89 BC to early 88 BC, the Marsian rebellion had essentially been broken, and Rome once again asserted its dominance throughout the region.²⁶

Meanwhile, Sulla's skillful leadership finally started to turn the tide in the Samnite theatre. He began 89 BC by capturing the enemy city of Stabiae, which dealt his foes a considerable setback. Following this success, he and a rebel Samnite alliance commander named Cluentius engaged in indecisive skirmishes. However, when a large force of Gallic soldiers strengthened Cluentius' troops, he and Sulla prepared for a decisive set-piece battle. When the two armies were staring at each other and their generals were diligently making final adjustments to their legions, a colossal Gallic soldier marched into no man's land, and in the ancient form, he challenged any Roman to single combat. A moment of widespread befuddlement and hesitation surely occurred, but eventually, a short Mauretanian boldly walked forward, accepted the impressive barbarian's challenge and surprisingly slew the gargantuan. The defeat shook the enemy ranks so severely that the Gallic soldiers fled, leaving Cluentius' army undermanned, with gaps and no longer with a viable battle plan.

After the cowardly Gallic contingent withdrew, Cluentius' soldiers were unable to maintain their position, and they became seriously alarmed and retreated in disorder to the nearby city of Nola. Sulla's troops rushed after the fleeing Italians and killed 3,000 of them, but not before many reached Nola's gate. The city hurriedly admitted as many as they could until they noticed Sulla's rapidly advancing army. Rather than allow Sulla easy access to the city, the citizens barred its gate, leaving at least 20,000 of Cluentius' troops, including Cluentius himself, outside the walls' safety. He prepared a hasty defence, but his soldiers were no match for Sulla's army. Once the Romans arrived, an organized and efficient slaughter began. Twenty thousand Italians, including their general, died outside Nola that day.

The victorious leader moved on from Nola and neutralized an entire tribe, the Hirpini, without much bloodshed. When he arrived at the Hirpini city of Aeclanum in southern Italy, he surrounded it and demanded its surrender. The Hirpini hiding behind Aeclanum's walls were awaiting reinforcements from the Lucani, and they attempted to

employ delaying tactics, much like Jugurtha once did. They asked for an additional day to consider Sulla's proposals, but the impatient Roman general was wise to their schemes. As a result, he allowed them only one hour to decide their fate. In the meantime, he ordered his soldiers to pile firewood around the city, and when the hour finally lapsed, he set the wood alight. The city quickly capitulated to avoid complete destruction, and the other Hirpini cities also surrendered out of fear of Sulla, essentially neutralizing the entire Hirpini tribe.

Sulla again advanced to another ambitious target, but this time set his sights on the Samnites, who were renowned warriors and tenacious Roman foes. As he approached their territory, he astutely avoided the main route so as to be undetected. Using a circuitous passage, he was able to surprise, outflank and defeat the army guarding the roads leading into Samnite country. Once within their realm, he captured the Samnite city of Bovianum, which is most likely modern-day Bojano. Sulla's thrust into the Samnites' realm and corresponding success was a major blow to the Samnite war effort and their pride.²⁷

While Sulla was instrumental in turning the tide against the Samnites, he wasn't the only successful commander in the Samnite theatre. Others were busy recapturing cities and rebel strongholds and defeating Italian armies. By the end of 89 BC, Roman field generals still roamed the countryside and engaged in serious operations. However, the majority of the Italian peninsula was once again subdued by the Romans, with the exception of certain participants of the Samnites' coalition who continued their stubborn resistance.²⁸ Once the ultimately senseless war finally concluded, supposedly over 300,000 Romans and Italians had perished. Yet, many of the Italians had gained their initial goal of enfranchisement as the Senate enrolled many of the former Italian combatants as citizens.²⁹ While the Social War's waning days made the entire war seem like a pointless endeavour, it did create a new generation of leaders, including Sulla. He quickly became Rome's newest hero because of his exploits during the Social War, and he had the backing of the nobles, which made him a very promising and influential politician. As 89 BC slowly wound down and with the Social War appearing to wrap up, the popular Sulla decided to seek the consulship. This surely drove the jealous Marius mad, seeing his adversary hailed as the Social War's champion and the consulship's heir apparent. Nevertheless, a new threat then

emerged, rekindling their bitter rivalry.³⁰

XVI

MITHRIDATES

‘O king, either endeavour to be stronger than the Romans, or else quietly submit to their commands.’

Gaius Marius

Marius may have needlessly attempted to provoke a war with King Mithridates of Pontus by challenging him to submit to Rome or to become more powerful than the Republic, but he presciently recognized that the king’s ambition and lawlessness would likely lead to conflict with Rome. The old general’s keen senses were correct. Mithridates was everything that he and other Romans feared, and much more, but Pontus hadn’t always been a Roman enemy.

Following Alexander the Great’s death in 323 BC, his sprawling empire was divided among many of his deputies. One such general was a one-eyed Macedonian commander named Antigonus, who assumed control over swathes of Asia Minor and the neighbouring regions. He proclaimed himself king, but one night he received a troubling dream about one of his kingdom’s inhabitants, Mithridates, a member of the Persian royal family. In his dream, Mithridates transported Antigonus’ fortune to Pontus, a coastal region on the Black Sea’s southern shore. Antigonus determined that he should heed his dream’s warning, protect his wealth and capture and execute Mithridates. As a result, Antigonus apprehended him without difficulty, but the crafty Mithridates orchestrated his own escape alongside six of his associates. They withdrew to a fortified location in Cappadocia, a region in Asia Minor just south of Pontus. Luckily for Mithridates, Cappadocia turned out to be beyond the king’s reach. This is where the burgeoning Mithridatic kingdom began to take shape.¹

As the remnants of Alexander’s successor kingdoms declined in power, Mithridates and his heirs – who were also mostly named Mithridates – filled the vacuum and grew the Pontic kingdom into a respectable regional power. By the reign of Mithridates V, Pontus formed an alliance with Rome and even aided the Republic during the Third Punic War by providing troops and warships.² He was, however, murdered around 120 BC by an unknown killer, leaving his kingdom to his wife, Laodice VI, and his two young sons, Mithridates VI and

the younger Mithridates Chrestus. In time, the shrewd Mithridates VI deposed his brother, Chrestus, and his mother, who may have been plotting against him, and he emerged as Pontus' sole leader.³ However, after his father's death and his mother's possible scheming, he developed a less than healthy fear of being assassinated, specifically by poison. To mitigate the risks, he resolved to inoculate himself to the old world's known toxins by regularly consuming a poison antidote and small doses of toxins. Once in power, the paranoid and cunning young king quickly gazed abroad, seeking an opportunity to expand his dominion, but he quickly ran into conflict with the Romans.⁴

Mithridates V had re-expanded Pontus' influence into Cappadocia by invading the kingdom, which concerned the Romans. They preferred neighbouring nations who were small, friendly and controllable, but Pontus was a nascent power that Rome believed it could no longer leave to its own devices. Nevertheless, Pontus' and Cappadocia's history was complicated. They often had their own kings, but Pontus believed that Cappadocia was part of its realm. Cappadocia often strenuously disagreed. However, it was not until after Mithridates V's reign that Rome demanded that Pontus relinquish its power over Cappadocia, even though Pontus had long considered it within its domain. Rome also demanded that Pontus recognize a man named Ariobarzanes as Cappadocia's new king because the Cappadocians had elected him as their leader. All of this naturally left the young Mithridates VI frustrated.⁵

There were reasons why Rome preferred an independent Cappadocian state with Ariobarzanes as its king. It asserted Roman influence in the area, limited Pontus' power and turned Cappadocia into a friendly client-state that would presumably obey Rome's will.⁶ Consequently, when Sulla was serving as a propraetor, he was dispatched to ensure that Ariobarzanes was successfully installed as king. For the time being, Mithridates begrudgingly complied with the Roman demands and diplomacy prevailed.⁷

However, when Rome was preoccupied with the perilous Social War, Mithridates abruptly resumed his expansionist policies. He raised and transferred a Pontic army to Socrates of Bithynia, a kingdom in north-western Asia Minor that bordered the Black Sea. Socrates was the legitimate King of Bithynia's brother, and Rome had essentially bestowed the kingdom to his ancestors. With Mithridates' army, Socrates easily deposed his sibling, Nicomedes, and Socrates became

the titular King of Bithynia, even though the real power lay with Mithridates. Concurrently, Mithridates reneged on his Cappadocian agreement with Rome, and he replaced its king, Ariobarzanes, with his personal choice, Ariarathes, which gave Mithridates control over the kingdom.

Rome did not appreciate the king's meddling in its foreign affairs, and Rome's message was clear because it resolved to reinstall Nicomedes in Bithynia and Ariobarzanes in Cappadocia. Rome demanded that Mithridates desist and adhere to its orders, but the king was weary of what he believed was Roman encroachment in his sphere of influence. He viewed their actions as an inappropriate interposition in both Cappadocia and Bithynia, but Rome had meddled in the Pontic realm before. It had previously revoked Pontus' longstanding claim to the region of Phrygia, located in central Asia Minor. Phrygia was originally absorbed into Pontus via an illicit purchase from an unscrupulous Roman general. The Senate had originally invalidated the settlement, but only when Mithridates was a young man did Rome finally decide to enforce the Senate's declaration. Following these events, Mithridates was tired of submitting to Rome's will. In response to Mithridates' manoeuvrings, Marius' former consular colleague from 101 BC, Manius Aquillius, was dispatched to lead an embassy to the East. It was tasked with restoring the monarchs to their respective thrones and was supported by the governor of Roman Asia, Lucius Cassius, and his soldiers.

Aquillius and Cassius marshalled their meagre forces in a period when most of Rome's precious resources were being devoted to the ongoing Social War. As a consequence, the two assembled a much larger army comprised largely of locals from Phrygia and Galatia, a region south-west of Pontus, and they quickly restored Ariobarzanes and Nicomedes to their respective kingdoms. The two Romans then emboldened the recently reinstalled kings to begin plundering Mithridates' realm, presumably as a punitive measure and to weaken his regional dominance. Both were understandably hesitant to directly provoke the belligerent king, but Aquillius and Cassius promised the monarchs that Rome would assist them if necessary. Nicomedes of Bithynia owed considerable debts to Rome and may have felt pressured to approve looting Mithridates' territory. Therefore, he reluctantly ordered pillaging parties to raid the Pontic town of Amastris – modern-day Amasra – where Mithridates purposefully offered no opposition. He hoped that if he permitted the Bithynians to

violate his borders, terrorize his subjects and despoil them of their wealth, then he would have a sufficient claim for openly warring with Bithynia. Because of Mithridates' strategy, Amastris was easily plundered and Nicomedes' troops returned home loaded with booty.

When Mithridates believed that he had incurred adequate injuries to justify invading Bithynia, he sent an emissary to present the Pontic grievances to the Roman generals and ambassadors, but Nicomedes' representatives staunchly defended their king's actions to the Romans, including Aquillius. The Mithridatic representative spoke brilliantly, but the Romans' judgement was predetermined before the presentations. As a result, Mithridates' representative was rudely dismissed before he was able to complete his eloquent rebuttal, which sealed Mithridates' decision. He planned to unleash the Pontic military juggernaut and subjugate the region.

Mithridates had previously expanded his kingdom, annexed nearby Greek states and absorbed the Colchians, a people living on the eastern side of the Black Sea. He formed military partnerships with states including, but not limited to, the Scythians, Taurians, Bastarnae, Thracians, certain Danubian tribes and perhaps even the burgeoning kingdom of Parthia, which was centred in Iran. Mithridates also cemented an alliance with Armenia by marrying his daughter to its king, Tigranes. The Pontic monarch additionally dispatched envoys to Egypt and Seleucia in hopes of creating powerful alliances. Because of his preparations and ambitions, Mithridates possessed scores of warships and mustered an army consisting of hundreds of thousands of soldiers. He was not bent on just regaining Cappadocia, Bithynia and Phrygia. The Pontic monarch, who claimed to be a descendent of both Alexander the Great and Persia's former King Darius, planned on creating a mighty empire.

Mithridates prepared for war and set his sights on Cappadocia. Mithridates' son, Ariarathes, commanded an army and promptly invaded the region and easily subdued it, subsequently ejecting Ariobarzanes from the throne. In response, Rome emphatically demanded that the insolent Mithridates comply with their commands and cease his meddling in Cappadocia and Bithynia. Meanwhile, Cassius began assembling an army to impose Rome's will upon Mithridates, but his forces were predominantly comprised of local tribes because his army of Roman legionaries was wholly inadequate for the looming conflict. The Roman coalition was divided into four different armies, each at least 40,000-strong, including cavalry.

Cassius guarded the border of Bithynia and Galatia with his force. Aquillius blocked the Pontic generals' path into Bithynia, and Quintus Oppius, a Roman *propraetor*, stood vigilant with his troops in the Cappadocian mountains. The Romans also mobilized a naval force, which was stationed at the Black Sea's entrance near Byzantium, modern-day Istanbul. Nicomedes of Bithynia also joined the Romans and raised an army of 56,000, including horsemen. The coalition produced an army over 170,000 strong and must have felt confident in their chances of quickly defeating the quarrelsome Mithridates.

However, the Pontic king raised a much larger force, which, if the ancient writers are to be believed, numbered approximately 290,000 foot soldiers and horsemen, in addition to 400 warships. When the monarch was ready, he advanced towards the Roman alliance. The first battle occurred in 88 BC, when a Pontic contingent made contact with Nicomedes' force near the River Amnias, the modern-day Gök River. Mithridates' generals outmanoeuvred Nicomedes and unleashed their scythe-armed chariots with devastating effect. Many Bithynians were severed in half by the blades and lay on the ground in pieces but still breathing. Between being outflanked, surrounded and demoralized by the chariots' devastation, the Bithynians lost heart and a large number were cut down. Nicomedes withdrew with his remaining soldiers, and the Pontic forces seized his deserted camp and much of his wealth. Then Mithridates surprisingly ordered the battle's prisoners to be released and permitted to return to their homes. He even provided them with supplies for their trek. Reports of his disposition towards clemency spread widely, which was probably part of the calculating king's plan all along. He hoped that if he treated the defeated enemy well, then he would be viewed positively, win new adherents and lessen others' disdain for him.

The first battle was an abysmal failure for the Roman coalition, but their concerns swiftly grew. The Mithridatic forces next tracked Aquillius' army along the border between Pontus and Bithynia, where they engaged his troops. The Pontic generals easily routed them and seized Aquillius' camp. Ten thousand men from Aquillius' army died and 300 were apprehended, but once again, Mithridates showed his capacity for exhibiting clemency and released the prisoners. Meanwhile, under the cover of darkness, Aquillius escaped into Pergamon, a major city in the Roman province of Asia. The Roman coalition determined that their enterprise was hopelessly folly and withdrew, essentially conceding temporary defeat. The naval force

guarding the mouth of the Black Sea also ceded the waterway that they guarded and meekly surrendered many of their ships to Mithridates. The Roman alliance was repulsed after only a few clashes and virtually granted Mithridates *carte blanche* in the East, which he gladly accepted.

Mithridates then conquered many lands, including Bithynia, Phrygia, Mysia in north-western Asia Minor and even the Roman province of Asia. As his armies spread over the East, he captured the Roman generals Oppius and Aquillius. Oppius was treated as well as could be expected in the ancient world. He was humiliated and paraded in front of the Pontic forces, but no physical injury was perpetrated upon him. However, Aquillius wasn't so fortunate. Mithridates blamed the conflict on him because he had dismissed the Pontic grievances following the Bithynian plundering raids and sided with Nicomedes. Consequently, Mithridates exhibited his penchant for cruelty and unrestrained vengeance. Aquillius was compelled to publicly refer to himself as 'maniac' instead of Manius Aquillius and scalding liquid gold was drained down his throat, which was supposed to signify Mithridates' opposition to Roman corruption. Aquillius' example was proof that there were limits to Mithridates' purported clemency. When the Senate and the Roman people learned of Mithridates' offences, they immediately declared war on Pontus, but they weren't able to dispatch a capable army to confront him yet because they were still in the midst of the calamitous Social War.⁸

Very early on, Marius had perceptively recognized Mithridates' foreboding characteristics and yearned to be the general to vanquish the Pontic king. When the Social War began winding down, Rome could finally return its attention towards foreign policy and afford to divert its limited resources to overseas conflicts. A prospective war with Pontus promised to be rewarding and lucrative, and as a result, several Romans were fervently vying to lead the war against Mithridates, including Marius. He made it well-known that he was especially interested and available to conduct the Mithridatic campaign, but his professed reason for desiring the generalship was hardly believable. He claimed that he only wished to lead the effort in order to teach his son how to be a general, which was a feeble excuse that no one accepted. It seems that the real reason that Marius was infatuated with prosecuting the war was that it would permit him the chance to return to political prominence, grant him a third triumph and allow him to confiscate Pontus' seemingly boundless wealth.

Regardless of Marius' self-centred motives, he hoped that he would be awarded the necessary proconsular powers to march legions towards Pontus. However, this would have been somewhat unusual considering that he hadn't held an elected political office in some time.

If Marius was to receive the Mithridatic command, then he faced a tough uphill battle. Marius had created many enemies throughout his long political career, fell from grace after his sixth consulship and was a partisan whom the nobles would never support. His age was another undeniable drawback. During the Social War, when he last commanded legions, he had retired, citing old age and/or health issues. How was Rome expected to entrust him with slaying the nimble King Mithridates if he was ill? Many didn't, but apparently a sizeable portion of Romans supported the idea of assigning him to the command anyway. The naysayers, however, repeatedly poked fun at the elderly general and suggested that he should spend more time treating his infirmities in the therapeutic baths at Baiae, an ancient resort spa near Naples known for its mineral baths.⁹

Still, there were other reasons that prompted certain Romans to doubt Marius' ability to lead troops again. The man who claimed to believe in austere living had long withdrawn into a lavish lifestyle. He was, after all, one of the wealthiest men in the Roman world, richer than many kings even. Marius had purchased an estate in Misenum, a port city in the Gulf of Naples, that was allegedly 'effeminately and luxuriously furnished', and this wasn't his only impressive villa. His splendid and pampered way of life obviously did not bode well for the man who wished to be widely viewed as the Republic's macho saviour.¹⁰ Therefore, Marius concocted a plan to undoubtedly prove that he was still able to lead legions in Rome's defence, even though the last time he led an extended expedition was more than a decade earlier. Every day, the general conspicuously made his way to the Campus Martius to openly exhibit his physical prowess. The Campus Martius, or the Field of Mars, was publicly owned land which was just beyond the city's *pomerium*. Throughout the Roman Republic's history, it was used to graze pastoral animals, serve as a staging ground for military mobilizations and drills and many youths also exercised there.

Marius figured that daily public displays of his robust physical abilities would assuage any concerns over his age and health. Yet, he had indeed grown overweight throughout the years of partial

retirement and luxurious living, and he was also prone to fatigue after limited exertions. Nonetheless, the roughly 68-year-old exercised alongside Rome's youths and impressed many spectators. While dressed in full military armour, he proved that he was still surprisingly agile and light on his feet, and he additionally exhibited his remarkable equestrian proficiency. The historical record is silent as to how Marius reacted once he returned home after these exhaustive exercises. His body surely ached from arthritis, war injuries and extended atrophy. His wife, Julia, must have witnessed Marius' groans and complaints in a period before modern ointments and painkillers. Regardless, the old general hoped that the Romans would view his public displays as evidence that he was more than capable of prosecuting at least one more war.¹¹

It may have been at this juncture that a strange bit of recorded history about Marius' self-restraint, tolerance for pain and vanity occurred. It seems that Marius had acquired varicose veins in his legs, which had become unsightly. He was unhappy with their appearance and opted for ancient cosmetic surgery, perhaps to look younger. However, it is quite possible that Julia also found them highly unattractive and encouraged him to consult a physician. Nevertheless, he arrived for his doctor's appointment and stretched one leg out to give the physician ample access. Without the use of modern anesthesia, Marius endured excruciating pain as the doctor fumbled about with a surgical knife. As the physician sliced at his calf and picked the veins out, Marius tolerated the agony with calm resolve without flinching or uttering a sound. As the surgeon completed one leg and began to prepare the other, Marius halted him and calmly informed the doctor that the remedy simply didn't merit the suffering. The historian, Plutarch, placed this episode around the time that Marius married his wife, Julia, but it is certainly possible that it actually occurred as he was attempting to prove his youthfulness and stamina to all of Rome.¹²

No shortage of Romans observed Marius' pleas for the Mithridatic command, as well as his public exercises and feats of strength, and while some were genuinely impressed, others bore great pity for the ageing Roman hero. They viewed him as a legend who had risen from lowly origins, saved Rome from the barbarians and held unprecedented political power. He had enjoyed two triumphs and six consulships, and he was wealthy beyond measure. Yet, Marius was clearly not satisfied with his unparalleled life. The illustrious

statesman resorted to physical contests with youths in a vain hope that Rome would once again request his services. His life of abundant successes and riches was not enough for the famed general. He felt that he needed more. He was driven by ambition, greed and the need to be needed, and a host of Romans quickly detected this. They were saddened to see the lengths that this renowned leader was willing to go to obtain one more military command, but as he assiduously fought to lead the war effort, he was sorely disappointed by the outcome. However, he was not finished commanding legions.¹³

XVII

JUSTITIUM

'The first army of her own citizens had invaded Rome as a hostile country.'

– Appian of Alexandria

With the Social War's operations tapering off and Roman hegemony being asserted throughout most of Italy, Lucius Cornelius Sulla returned his attention to the *cursus honorum*. Because of his notable battlefield successes in the Social War, Sulla became incredibly popular, and the rising star declared his candidacy for the consulship of 88 BC. His affable and charming personality made him a natural politician, and he boasted ardent supporters from across the political and social spectrums. He enjoyed the backing from many of the elites because he was a patrician who aligned with the *optimates*, but the masses also flocked to his standard because of his recent military victories.¹ As a result, Sulla leveraged his widespread appeal and vast political connections to bolster his campaign, and when voting commenced, he was easily elected to the consulship, possibly winning unanimously. However, like his mentor, Marius, he quickly learned that navigating domestic politics could be incredibly challenging.²

The surging power and popularity of Marius' former subordinate-turned-foe surely irked the ever-jealous, retired commander. The wound that started with Sulla downplaying Marius' role in the Jugurthine War followed by a disagreement during the Cimbric War, had festered over the years. Marius powerlessly watched as Sulla's acclaim grew while his own considerable influence stagnated. Before the Social War broke out, the old wounds were re-aggravated when King Bocchus of Mauretania sought to gain additional Roman favour and please his old friend Sulla. He donated images depicting Jugurtha being surrendered to Sulla, which infuriated Marius because it downgraded his own laudable achievements while celebrating Sulla's. The old general surely thought that he had won hard-fought battles in Numidia in which no other Roman general could have prevailed, and he had sent Sulla to Bocchus to work out the mundane details of one man's surrender. Nevertheless, Marius was incensed and marshalled his substantial influence to remove the images from Rome, but he was unsuccessful. Sulla was no longer the poverty-stricken man who dreamed of restoring honour to his family name. He was a seasoned

general and sharp politician with the backing of many influential Roman families, who defended him against Marius' attempts to remove the donated artwork. Marius' and Sulla's petty feud nearly erupted in Rome, but the Social War temporarily diverted their attentions elsewhere.

However, matters between Marius and Sulla soured even further. Sulla had already been married three times, but an opportunity arose, permitting him to take a wife hailing from a great Roman family, which increased his standing and power. Sulla seized the chance and married the strong and influential Caecilia, who was Lucius Caecilius Metellus' daughter. This Metellus was a former consul, censor, pontifex maximus (Rome's high priest) and the brother of Marius' old benefactor-turned-adversary, Quintus Caecilius Metellus. Sulla's alliance with the Metellus family solidified and strengthened his aristocratic support, and Marius was confronted by this new formidable partnership.³

Once Sulla was installed as consul alongside Quintus Pompeius Rufus in 88 BC, he also obtained the governorship of Asia for 87 BC by lot, and with it, the highly coveted command against King Mithridates of Pontus. The situation in the East had become untenable. Mithridates' armies were spreading throughout the region and even invaded mainland Greece, but his worst crime shocked the world.⁴ On a given day, he ordered his agents to round up all of the Italian peoples in his growing realm and mercilessly massacre them. Between 80,000 and 150,000 Italians were ruthlessly slain in a single day. Following this dastardly deed, there was no avoiding a war of retribution with Rome, and Sulla was tasked with leading it.⁵

For years, Marius had persistently dreamed of leading the lucrative campaign against Mithridates, winning back the Roman people's admiration, enjoying one last adventure, revelling in the glory and acquiring Pontus' riches. He even attempted to stir up the combative and ambitious king before the Social War to provoke a conflict, in the hope that he would be tasked with confronting Mithridates, but Sulla had robbed him of his glorious war, or so he likely believed. Sulla and Marius were already bitter rivals, but to ally with his former benefactor's family and secure the top post in the coming war with Mithridates inspired irreversible rancour. The two leading men's dispute eventually affected many thousands of Romans, but not without warning.

Numerous ill omens were observed during Sulla's consulship, which

were believed to portend a coming calamity of some sort. Birds carried their young into the Roman streets, where they consumed their hatchlings and then returned the remains to their nests. Rodents mindlessly gnawed on the sacred gold in one of the city's temples, but when one such mouse was caught in a trap, it didn't die. Instead, it gave birth to five younglings and promptly devoured three of them. Diviners explained that these signs were clearly proof that one of the eight ages of men was ominously concluding.

These events terrified the Romans, and the Senate convened to discuss their meaning and to develop a plan of action. The senators anxiously conversed in the Temple of Bellona, which was the goddess of war's home that stood just outside of Rome, but they were interrupted when a bird swooped into the temple and released a mangled grasshopper on the shrine's floor. To the seers, the grasshopper represented many of the poor Roman inhabitants who consumed the fields' produce, while the bird symbolized the landowners who watched over the fields. They believed that this meant that there would be enmity and discord among the privileged landed segment of society and the proletariat. After this spectacle, Rome's trepidation was heightened even further.⁶

Meanwhile, Marius plotted to have Sulla legally stripped of the Mithridatic command and have it transferred to himself, but he did not always choose the best allies to accomplish his goals. One of the tribunes of 88 BC was Publius Sulpicius Rufus. He was a famed orator and an unscrupulous politician, even by Roman standards, and he apparently idolized the corrupt Saturninus. He travelled with an armed bodyguard that was 3,000-strong and a corps of 600 equestrians, which he defiantly named his anti-senate. Needless to say, this guard could be very persuasive in political manoeuvrings. Sulpicius even brazenly and openly sold Roman citizenship to those with enough wealth to afford it, not to those who had earned it or were approved for citizenship. Marius fatefully chose to partner with this disreputable man.⁷

The two secretly conspired to assign the highly desired Mithridatic command to Marius, but first, the old general was to help Sulpicius pass his ambitious slate of bills. The corrupt tribune proposed a bill to recall certain exiles and a measure that limited the amount of debt a senator could carry, even though Sulpicius owed prodigious sums of money.⁸ Sulpicius also aspired to enroll the new citizens created in the Social War's wake into the thirty-five previously existing voting tribes.

However, if this bill was ratified, then the new citizens would outnumber the old citizens in the voting blocs, which many Romans found detestable. Nevertheless, this would give Sulpicius great power and influence. In his viewpoint, the majority of voters would be favourable to anything that he proposed because he had given them majority power in the assembly. It seems that Marius agreed to use his still considerable influence to support Sulpicius' measures if the tribune would in turn introduce and ensure the passage of a bill transferring the Mithridatic command from Sulla to himself. There may have been more to this secret agreement, including monetary compensation, considering how indebted Sulpicius was, but regardless of the details, they privately agreed to the pact.⁹

Sulpicius proposed his slate of varying bills to the people, but temporarily withheld the measure dealing with Marius and Mithridates. In fact, only Marius, Sulpicius and perhaps their closest confidants knew about the plot. Nevertheless, the consuls and the Senate viewed most of Sulpicius' measures as entirely unpalatable, but the enrollment of the new citizens seriously threatened the status quo. It would have given more voting power to the new citizens, which many of the old citizens vehemently opposed. As the citizenship referendum approached, there was an outbreak of violence and rioting. The old and new citizens defiantly fought one another over the proposal in Rome's crowded streets, using sticks and rocks as weapons. In response, Sulla and his consular colleague, Rufus, declared an indefinite *justitium*, which suspended voting. This was either decreed to allay the rampant violence or may have been deceptively used merely to prevent the measure from being enacted. A *justitium* that temporarily postponed a vote was not out of the ordinary. Often, if an ill omen was observed or perhaps rioting occurred, then public business would cease, but if the consuls declared a *justitium* simply because they opposed Sulpicius' bill, then they may have overplayed their hand on this occasion.¹⁰

The postponement infuriated vast portions of the masses, but their anger was likely inflamed by Sulpicius' stinging rhetoric and his anti-senate's efficacy. Eventually, violence re-erupted in Rome over the consuls' steadfast refusal to allow a vote.¹¹ Sulpicius ordered his personal guard and faction to arm themselves with daggers and return to the forum. When they arrived, they menacingly called on the consuls to obey their demands and lift the voting suspension, which Sulpicius decried as wholly illegal. However, the *justitium* wasn't

technically unconstitutional nor was it without precedent so long as it ceased when the ill omens and violence dissipated. Nonetheless, the increasingly indignant crowd threatened the consuls' lives. Rufus fearfully slunk away from the agitated mob, but the disorder resulted in the death of his son, who was also Sulla's son-in-law. There is no evidence to suggest that Marius was directly involved in orchestrating any of the violence, but it is certainly possible. It was more than likely fomented by Sulpicius, who was no stranger to nefarious schemes, but there is no record of Marius attempting to prevent the disorder at this stage either. Nevertheless, the savagery continued unabated.¹²

Sulla's life was also endangered, and he likewise fled from the forum.¹³ He may have left the scene under the guise of seeking counsel, but furious detractors probably chased him out.¹⁴ Regardless of what prompted him to leave, he cleverly sought refuge in an unlikely place, Marius' home, because none of his enemies would consider searching for him there. The old general compassionately provided the consul sanctuary, even though they were indefatigable foes. Yet, Sulla later unequivocally denied seeking refuge with Marius. He alleged that he arrived at Marius' villa to discuss the political situation and persuade Marius to refrain from aiding Sulpicius. This may or may not be true, but any statement from Sulla about Marius should be viewed with extreme scepticism because of their enmity. Nevertheless, it is unclear as to whether Sulla arrived at Marius' estate by chance, was funnelled there or arrived to seek a settlement. Whatever the case, it seems that Marius graciously provided Sulla sanctuary in a time of great danger.¹⁵

Once Sulla felt safe enough to depart from Marius' home, he cautiously did so, and Marius personally escorted him out of one of his estate's side doors to permit him the necessary stealth to avoid detection.¹⁶ Following his brush with danger, Sulla promptly rescinded the voting suspension, but his reputation and standing were noticeably tarnished. After the episode, Sulla's once immense popularity certainly withered, but more importantly, he was no longer entirely safe in Rome. Therefore, he wisely decided to depart for Capua, a city north of Naples, to prepare his legions for the coming Mithridatic War. He was, however, unaware that Marius was busy plotting to seize his prized command.¹⁷

With Sulla no longer in Rome, there was only one consul left to attempt to stymie Sulpicius' agenda. However, many were clamouring to vote for his proposals, and Sulpicius and his anti-senate were

tenacious in acquiring the opportunity to give his bills consideration. Consul Rufus vainly struggled to thwart Sulpicius' efforts until he was ultimately stripped of his office by a vote of the people, which was certainly an uncommon tactic. After he was deposed in a questionable manner, Sulpicius' last major barrier was removed. So long as the tribunes did not veto one another, they could present any proposal to the people without fear of any real impediments. For the time being, Marius and Sulpicius essentially controlled Rome, and Sulpicius' already proposed measures were easily enacted.¹⁸

Not long after, a measure to transfer the Mithridatic command to Marius was formally introduced to the people for their consideration. This was not an illegal or unconstitutional tactic. The Senate often appointed individuals to lead certain commands or fill specific offices, while others were chosen by lot. However, the people were vested with the power to override these decisions, even though this was a relatively unparalleled move. It was also uncommon to grant a private citizen like Marius a major command such as this. Nonetheless, when the votes were tallied and despite Marius' advanced age, he was triumphantly appointed as the new general who was tasked with leading the war against Mithridates. For a moment, Marius enjoyed knowing that he was formally awarded the command that he had desired for so long and had defeated Sulla politically, giving the vengeful veteran brief satisfaction.¹⁹

When Sulla arrived in Capua, where his soldiers were encamped, he became aware of the controversial transfer of command. He was stunned by the motion and was beyond incensed. Threatening the consuls' lives, rioting in the streets, pushing legislation that he opposed and even killing his son-in-law was bad, but legally removing him from his strongly desired command was wholly unacceptable to him, which revealed Sulla's misguided priorities. It was likely at this juncture that Sulla first considered the unprecedented and unlawful decision of leading his legions to Rome to install a favourable government and protect his desirable military appointment. As the situation developed, Marius and Sulpicius quickly learned that they had entirely miscalculated Sulla's response to the transfer of command.²⁰

Sulla convened his legionaries and passionately addressed them. He announced that Marius and Sulpicius had treacherously colluded to remove him from his post. The soldiers were pining for the conflict to begin because they were under the impression that the Asian war's

spoils would be great. Somehow, likely suggested by Sulla, the troops became concerned that Marius had intended raising a fresh army and disbanding the current troops encamped at Capua, which would deprive them of Mithridates' booty. This was not true at all, because the command had simply been transferred. Marius hadn't been empowered to levy a new army, but the legionaries supposedly believed the false rumour anyway. It seems more than likely that the soldiers preferred to serve under Sulla because, unlike Marius, the consul was known to be more generous and less of a disciplinarian than his rival. While speaking to his men, Sulla presented himself as an injured victim who had been publicly humiliated, and he claimed that Marius and Sulpicius had shamefully plotted against him. Sulla may not have been completely certain of his course of action just yet, but he certainly must have leaned towards the idea of sacking Rome. However, he definitely didn't inform his troops that he was seriously considering entering the eternal city as an invading army. Instead, he simply instructed them to be prepared, but they clearly understood his veiled statement. In fact, many were ready to head to Rome to protect Sulla's dignity and their own chance of amassing the war's spoils.²¹

Following the Mithridatic campaign bill's enactment, military tribunes were dispatched to Capua to legally facilitate the transfer of power from Sulla to Marius, but nothing went as planned. Sulla had reached the legions before the tribunes, and he must have prepared them for what they were about to face and fanned their simmering anger. When the tribunes arrived, Sulla's men promptly stoned them to death, even though the tribunes were merely following lawful orders. The historical record is unclear as to whether Sulla directly ordered their murders or if he even tacitly approved of them. While Sulla was certainly aware of the tribunes' deaths, there is no mention of any legionaries being disciplined for this murderous attack.²²

Supposedly, Marius' faction viciously responded by murdering some of Sulla's associates in Rome and confiscating their property, but there is little evidence to suggest that this actually occurred.²³ Nevertheless, the situation quickly escalated. Sulla was already marching his six legions – 35,000 men – towards Rome. Either this number includes auxiliaries or the legions were above their normal strength.²⁴ Regardless, his real goal was to illegally impose his will at Rome and protect his Mithridatic command. No Roman general had ever led an army to Rome intent on invading and controlling the city. As Sulla's unparalleled and highly unlawful plan became ever more

apparent, all but one of his officers conscientiously deserted his army. They refused to be complicit in the unconstitutional and immoral invasion of their capital city simply to protect Sulla's post and institute his version of order.²⁵

Two praetors, named Brutus and Servilius, were sent to halt Sulla's advance through diplomatic means, but they were unsuccessful. Unlike the unfortunate military tribunes, these men weren't viciously killed. Instead, they were stripped of their official insignia and senatorial togas and sent back to Rome humiliated.²⁶ Another envoy reached Sulla and inquired about his intentions and why he was treacherously leading an army against his homeland. Sulla responded, 'To deliver her from tyrants.' The political system was increasingly violent and often led by demagogues, but Sulla only decided to march on Rome when his command was endangered. His motivation was not just to free Rome from fanatical politicians, but to safeguard his lucrative appointment. When another embassy conferred with Sulla, he told them that Marius and Sulpicius could meet with him and his army on the Campus Martius to work out a compromise, but it seems clear that Sulla likely would have executed the two without demur. As he approached the capital, his consular colleague, Rufus, joined him in his camp and offered his blessing and full support for Sulla's endeavour, which he gladly accepted.²⁷

With Sulla repeatedly dismissing envoys and seemingly intent on seizing Rome, it was clear that there would be no peaceful resolution to settle the dispute. While Sulla marched his eager legionaries towards Rome, Marius and his faction frantically prepared the capital and hastily raised a meagre force to defend the city from Sulla's invasion. There was no army nearby to enlist into their cause, and there was only very limited time to strengthen the city's defences. Every day Sulla moved closer to Rome, and Marius knew that he must make do with only his inadequate local resources.²⁸ Marius had no real chance of defeating Sulla's troops with his civilian band of defenders. Therefore, he must have hoped that once Sulla reached the eternal city, his soldiers would lose heart when they discovered that they were fighting against the Roman civilians whom they were tasked with protecting.²⁹

At least one ancient author asserted that perhaps Sulla was not yet entirely bent on sacking Rome, but omens and predictions helped sway his decision. One clairvoyant promised Sulla that if he decided to wage a civil war, then the portents were favourable. The augur

even volunteered to be placed in Sulla's custody until the conflict was concluded so that he could be punished if his prediction turned out to be false. That was how confident the seer was about his divination. If the psychic's prediction didn't completely inspire Sulla's confidence, then another sign cemented his resolve. On a subsequent night, as Sulla rested, a goddess whom he worshipped furnished him with a lethal lightning bolt in a dream. She encouraged him to destroy his enemies, and in his vision, they were all killed. When he awoke, his mind was resolutely set. He continued to Rome, and there would be war.³⁰

While marching through Pictae, a city just south of Rome, senatorial envoys reached Sulla and implored him not to advance any closer to the city, asking him to stay at least 4½ miles away from Rome because the disaster had been averted. They claimed, 'The senate had voted that he should have all his rights.' This vague statement does not clearly define what these rights were, but Sulla gave the pretence of acquiescing and ordered his troops to ready their camp. It seems that the senatorial emissaries were, in fact, Marius' agents sent to delay Sulla's rapid approach, and Sulla probably recognized this. So, when the deputation departed, he immediately reneged on his word and resumed his advance. Marius' desire to return to power and his corresponding legal actions prompted the coming showdown, but Sulla's illegal march on Rome ensured the situation was irretrievable. The competing petty egos of Marius and Sulla threatened to destroy the great Roman Republic.³¹

Meanwhile, two of Sulla's subordinates, Lucius Basillus and Gaius Mummius, somehow seized the Esquiline Gate, a main entrance into the eastern side of the city, and the adjoining walls along the Esquiline Hill. It is unknown as to whether they seized the gate and wall via treachery, covert operation or brute military force. Nonetheless, the undermanned Marians braced themselves and desperately prepared to defend Rome from the invading army. Sulla reinforced the Esquiline region with an entire legion, while Rufus led another contingent to hold the Colline Gate at the northern end of the city. A third legion marched towards the bridge known as the Pons Sublicius that connected Rome to the land across the Tiber River. Meanwhile, a fourth legion guarded the walls and probably protected Sulla's rear and acted as a reserve force. With Rome surrounded and Sulla controlling two gates and a major bridgehead, he illegally marched the remaining legionaries into the city, gaining the dubious

distinction of being the first Roman general to enter Rome as a hostile invader, which was tantamount to treason.³²

When Sulla's troops cautiously made their way into Rome, the citizens furiously attempted to eject them from the city by raining stones on the exposed soldiers from the roofs of their houses, but they were no match for Sulla's organized and armed force. He callously instructed his troops to burn their homes if necessary and rain arrows on the Romans until they dispersed, indiscriminately killing combatants and noncombatants alike.³³ After Sulla threatened to raze their homes, many of the inhabitants passively complied with his demands to desist. Following this brief engagement, Sulla's troops met Marius' hastily assembled motley force and fought within the vicinity of the Esquiline Forum.³⁴ It is believed that the Esquiline Forum was a marketplace located directly inside the Esquiline Gate.³⁵ According to the historian Appian, this was the first military battle between two armies within Rome, but it clearly wouldn't be the last.

Sulla's troops ferociously smashed against the civilian force prepared and led by Marius, and for a time, the Marians held strong, despite the legion's copious advantages. Eventually, they even began to overpower the Sullans, but fearing defeat, Sulla rallied his legionaries by boldly heading to the battlefield while possessing a legionary standard. Roman standards were revered by the troops, and losing them to an enemy brought great shame upon the legion. This had the consequence of motivating his troops to fight with increased vigour, but the thought of their general possibly being injured or killed while leading from the front as the troops lost heart was also unbearable. Whatever the reason, his men were reinvigorated. Sulla also mobilized his reserves and ordered them to outflank Marius' troops by using the Suburran Road to approach their rear. The Marians quickly realized that they were nearly surrounded and overpowered, and they began to falter.³⁶

In time, the discipline, numbers and resolve of Sulla's trained army won the day, and they ultimately routed Marius' civilian force. As Marius retreated further into the city, he briefly lingered on the western portion of the Esquiline Hill near the Temple of Tellus, which was dedicated to the earth goddess. While he was there, he promised to grant freedom to any slave who volunteered to defend Rome against Sulla, but it was for naught.³⁷ Only three slaves joined his cause. Sulla had won the day, and Marius and many of his closest associates withdrew from Rome to escape Sulla's wrath.³⁸

After Sulla gained absolute control over Rome, he commendably prohibited his legionaries from plundering or killing Romans unnecessarily, and he posted troops throughout the city to maintain order and prevent any disobedience among his men. The following morning, Sulla convened the Romans to excuse his actions. He expressed his sorrow for Rome's woeful state, but he claimed that he had invaded the eternal city to free Rome from the grip of tyrants and demagogues, not as a foreign and hostile force. His actions, he promised, were out of necessity for Rome's well-being, but whether anyone believed his halft truths and blatant lies is open to debate. Before the assembly adjourned, Sulla instructed them to pass a law nullifying all of Sulpicius' measures and return the Mithridatic command to himself, and they obediently complied, likely under the watchful eye of his armed and very intimidating legions.³⁹

Sulla also convened the Senate and enacted a number of constitutional changes to protect his position, which he had recently learned was somewhat precarious, but he additionally exploited his position of unchallenged authority to seek revenge. The embittered consul had Marius and eleven of his associates each declared a *hostis*, an enemy of the people, and they were gratuitously sentenced to death *in absentia*. Sulla even placed a large bounty on Marius' head, which some considered incredibly rude considering that Marius had recently saved Sulla's life and given him refuge. Nevertheless, bounty hunters and Sulla's agents relentlessly tracked him like a loathsome criminal. The great general who once commanded mighty legions and wielded unprecedented power became a fugitive for essentially no reason other than he legally orchestrated the Mithridatic command's transfer.⁴⁰

However, only one of the newly condemned men, Sulpicius, was quickly apprehended. He was still a tribune, which was a sacrosanct position, but that didn't matter to Sulla. Sulpicius had proposed and passed the bill removing Sulla from his command, and for that, he must die. The tribune was easily captured when one of his slaves betrayed his master's location to Sulla. To repay the slave, Sulla first generously granted him his freedom. Then, because he had betrayed his master, Sulla thanklessly ordered him to be flung to his death from the Tarpeian Rock, an imposing precipice where many condemned Romans were thrown to their deaths. This exemplifies Sulla's strange view of justice, but Sulpicius didn't fare much better. He was discovered in the marshes near his estate in Laurentum, south-west of

Rome. Sulla's men captured the tribune, executed him and severed his head, which was publicly presented near the speaker's rostra in the forum. This was a clear message to Sulla's current and potential enemies, and it foreshadowed Rome's grim future.⁴¹

Sulla had once been the people's darling for his victories in the Social War, and he was a partisan closely allied with the aristocracy. However, after this episode, he began alienating both the proletariat and the elites. His unpopular *justitium* inspired widespread antipathy among the masses, but marching on Rome and sentencing the great Marius and his closest associates to death caused the people, and even the senatorial elites, to at least privately abhor him. Still, he was a sitting consul and had nearly 35,000 very persuasive troops supporting him. Yet even with a mighty army at his back, the Roman people were not willing to passively submit to all of Sulla's whims. A group of wealthy women earnestly lobbied Sulla to rescind his decree that had condemned Marius and his collaborators to death, but to no avail. Sulla firmly defended his actions against the legendary general and his allies, but the consul's other wishes weren't always fulfilled. He endorsed candidates for the next election cycle. Yet, the Roman voters surprisingly rejected some of them. Sulla was spurned by the electorate, but he accepted this repudiation with feigned grace. However, when a patrician military man named Lucius Cornelius Cinna was elected consul, Sulla became especially worried. Cinna was a man from the opposing faction and was no friend of Sulla's. He therefore forced Cinna to swear an oath not to subvert any of his policies. When this was completed and Sulla was satisfied that his will would presumably be enforced in Rome, he led his soldiers from the city and resumed his journey to confront the pugnacious King Mithridates.⁴²

XVIII

HOSTIS

'Fellow, darest thou kill Gaius Marius?'

– *Gaius Marius*

Gaius Marius once commanded powerful armies, defeated menacing foes and safeguarded Rome from being overrun by barbarians, but by 88 BC, he was without a home or a country. After Sulla defeated Marius' rag tag 'army' and seized Rome, Marius fled the authorities like an odious criminal to avoid being viciously slain. He was declared a *hostis*, sentenced to die and even much of his vast property was confiscated following Sulla's decree. As Marius prudently departed from the city following Sulla's victory, darkness was rapidly approaching, and as a result, he decided to spend the night at one of his country estates, which he had named Solonium. In the meantime, he ordered his son, Marius the Younger, to hasten to his father-in-law's farms to procure necessities and perhaps money for the group's journey and inevitable exile. During the interim, the elder Marius arranged to have a ship ready to transport his party away from Rome's turmoil.¹

Marius knew that he needed to flee from Sulla's grasp, and there were a few potentially promising destinations. The old general had bases of support in Italy, Spain and Africa. However, Italy was clearly not safe for Marius, given that Sulla was roaming around with a force of nearly 35,000 legionaries while Marius didn't have an army. Similarly, Marius' connections in Spain were substantial but insufficient to challenge Sulla. Africa was much more suitable for Marius because his veteran colonies were there, and he had an incredible number of clients in the region. If Marius and his comrades could safely reach Africa, then he felt assured that he could insulate himself from Sulla and perhaps even raise an army capable of confronting his former protégé. As a result, Marius settled on hazardingly journeying to Africa, and once everything had been hastily arranged, he was understandably eager to depart. However, by the following morning, his son had not yet returned from his errands, but Sulla's search parties were rapidly spreading across the Italian countryside to locate and kill the six-time consul. Time didn't permit Marius to dawdle and wait for his son, and consequently, Marius

cautiously departed from Solonium. He and his remaining companions, including his stepson, Granius, swiftly made their way to Marius' naval transport. It was moored in the harbour town of Ostia, roughly 18 miles south-west of Rome, and when the party arrived, they immediately set sail. Thus began the spectacular tale of Marius' life as a fugitive.²

When the younger Marius arrived at his father-in-law's farm, he was nearly captured by the attentive patrols, which were busy searching for the Marians. While he was collecting the essentials for their approaching exodus, a group of suspicious horsemen who were dispatched by Sulla neared, but quick thinking by a farmer saved Marius the Younger's life. He industriously hid Marius' son in a cart and covered him with produce, which was then transported unnoticed past the watchful cavalymen. From there, Marius the Younger briefly reunited with his wife, who must have been terribly worried for her family's well-being. Then he wisely departed under the cover of darkness, presumably for Ostia and gained admittance to a ship sailing for Africa.

Meanwhile, the elder Marius and his party sailed south to escape Sulla's reach, but while they were hugging the coast of Italy, their ship was harried by an unrelenting squall. As powerful waves crashed into the vessel and tossed it about, the sailors plainly knew that it was unwise to sail any further in the inclement weather. However, Marius urged them not to make landfall at the coastal town of Terracina, which was a little more than 60 miles from Ostia. It was home to one of Marius' bitter enemies, Geminus, and the old general clearly wished to avoid encountering him at all costs. The dutiful seamen promised to adhere to Marius' pleas, but they were eventually forced to attempt to drop anchor because the tempest had grown too strong and Marius had become incredibly seasick. They moored near the mountainous cape town of Circeii, which today is known as Mount Circeo and is some 12 miles west of Terracina.

With Marius ill, the gale's intensity increasing and their food stores already exhausted, they abandoned their ship and journeyed inland, but they aimlessly wandered about without any specific plan. Perhaps they were expending nervous energy or they hoped to fortuitously happen upon a friendly local, but they also risked great peril because they were just as likely to find an enemy as an ally. Nonetheless, as Marius' party ambled around the coast, they eventually made contact with a couple of herdsman who warned Marius that a company of

Sulla's horsemen was close by and actively searching for the condemned *hostis*. This was unsettling news for the beleaguered Marius, whose trip had not begun well, but he and his group of outcasts heeded the helpful shepherds' warnings. To conceal their presence from the cavalrymen who were tracking them, Marius and his associates quietly sought a temporary hideout, and they resorted to huddling together in a nearby dense forest until sunrise. While they spent the night in the darkened grove as frightened vagabonds, they must have lamented their unenviable state. Throughout the night, they struggled to find comfort, and as the next morning's light kissed the treetops, Marius and his comrades awoke to exhaustion and incessant hunger pangs after a day or more without sustenance or meaningful rest. Marius mustered what little energy remained to recite the propitious prophecies that he had received in his life, which seemed to give him hope for a glorious future. He anticipated that this would also invigorate his men and induce them to stay true to one another, which they did.

They continued their southward journey overland, since the sea and their vessel had been unforgiving. They proceeded to hike until they were around a little more than 2 miles from Minturnae, a city on the Liris River now called Minturno. Marius likely thought that he would find sympathetic parties in the town, but before they could arrive, the Marians caught the terrifying sight of a troop of Sulla's horsemen galloping at full speed towards them. Filled with panic, they anxiously turned and faced the Mediterranean, where they glimpsed the welcome sight of two passing ships. Their options were to either plunge into the sea and swim with haste to the vessels, that they prayed would take them aboard, or await a grisly death at the hands of Sulla's agents. The Marians resolved to take their chances with the sea and the unknown sailors. They dashed for the shore, dove into the water and frantically swam towards the boats. After vigorously paddling and kicking through the surf, Marius' companions reached one of the ships and climbed aboard, but the elderly Marius struggled in the water. His weathered body wasn't prepared to be battered by waves and pushed by currents, but the other boat and two of his slaves fortunately noticed him flailing about and fighting to stay afloat. They came to his rescue and swiftly retrieved him from the water. Once securely on the vessel, he caught his breath and surely extended his gratitude to the sailors and his slaves. However, most of his comrades were regrettably aboard the other craft.

The vessel that admitted Granius and Marius' other allies safely transported them without demur to a not-too-distant island named Aenaria, off the coast of modern-day Naples. Marius, however, was not so fortunate. As he boarded the other boat, Sulla's cavalrymen called out to the sailors and demanded that they either throw Marius overboard or dock their vessel and surrender him directly to them. Marius was overwhelmed with grief, and with tears trickling down his face, he humbly begged the sailors to not acquiesce and mercilessly leave him for dead. The seamen considered their options and discussed it among themselves, but they were unable to agree on a course of action at first. They vacillated between their options a number of times. After a lengthy debate, they finally came to an agreement, and one of the sailors revealed their decision as he obstinately replied to the horsemen's demands and exclaimed that they would not surrender the general to them. A very tense Marius must have relaxed and breathed a momentary sigh of relief as the horsemen stormed off, furious with the recalcitrant seamen. However, not long after, the sailors once more began to waver about what to do with Marius. They again decided that they would not deliver him to the Sullans, but they wouldn't harbour or transport him either. Therefore, they decided to return to land once the soldiers were a safe distance away and expel Marius from the boat. They believed that there was nothing virtuous about delivering the great Marius to his would-be killers, nor could they justify the danger of abetting him against the law. Instead, they abandoned him in a marshy area near the mouth of the Liris River.

Dejected, Marius silently lay on the shore as the seamen shipped off. He was unsure of what to do next, and he lingered for some time considering his options. He was still a hunted man, but he was determined not to surrender. He conjured up the energy to rise up and began walking towards the nearby swamps, which he probably believed would shelter him from Sulla's agents. He entered the marshes, but because there was no guiding path, he blindly wandered about. He struggled through the thick mud until he came across an old man who made a living in the swamp and lived in a modest hut. Marius, who was richer than many kings and once received more respect than most monarchs, instantly fell prostrate before the poor man. Marius pleaded for his assistance and promised to greatly reward his kindness. His entreaties were effective, and the kindly old man stated that Marius was welcome in his home if he desired a respite. However, the man warned, if he was being pursued, then he needed to

settle in a more remote location. Thankfully, he knew of such a place.³

Marius' primary goal was to avoid detection, and without hesitation, he informed his humble benefactor of his preference, whereby he was guided to a secluded location in the swamp. Marius rested in a place that would hopefully provide some shelter, while the old man covered him with vegetation to camouflage Marius from his hunters. Once he believed that Marius was adequately obscured from vision, his abettor returned to his shack. However, when he arrived, he was greeted by the probing agents of Marius' nemesis, Geminus of Terracina. As the elderly man was being interrogated, Marius overheard the commotion. With limited options, Marius tore off his clothes, presumably to keep them dry, and likely hid them, and he leapt headlong into the murky marsh to conceal himself. With his heart pounding in anticipation, the nearly 70-year-old Marius sat silently and motionless in the swamp with only his head exposed.⁴ Nevertheless, his precautions were in vain because Geminus' men easily located the nude Marius and plucked him from the mire. Dripping with the bog's detritus, he was immediately transported to Minturnae with a rope around his neck and handed over to the town's officials to determine his fate.⁵

Sulla had previously decreed that if Marius was captured, then he was to be summarily executed without hesitation, but Minturnae's officials thought that it would be wise to weigh their options before rashly killing him. Until they collectively agreed on the best course of action, he was kept under guard at the home of a divorcee named Fannia. Supposedly, as Marius was taken to her house, he witnessed a donkey running to quench its thirst, leaving behind its food, but when it noticed Marius, it abruptly halted. It stared at him in a way that gave Marius comfort, brayed loudly and finally walked by the old general before continuing to the water trough. The experience warmed Marius' dispirited heart because he believed that it was a propitious omen, and it strengthened and fortified his weakened resolve. Romans had a way of interpreting natural phenomena and prosaic events as portents of the future, and Marius viewed this as a clear sign from the gods. He believed that it signified that just as the donkey had refused its dry food and opted for water, that he would find safety in the sea rather than land, but he first had to find a way to escape his looming execution.⁶

After Marius viewed the donkey's symbolic actions, he slowly continued to Fannia's villa. Allegedly, Fannia disliked Marius because

when he was in his sixth consulship, he presided over her divorce and she wasn't entirely pleased with his final judgment. This probably isn't completely true, given that Marius forced Fannia's ex-husband to repay her dowry in full, and she was given no serious pecuniary penalty. She only received a minor symbolic punishment for some of her poor marital behaviour. It seems more than likely that she was relatively well-disposed towards Marius, but whatever her true feelings, when he first entered her home, she treated him very well. As the two acquaintances greeted one another, they conversed at length, and Marius described the sign that he had witnessed to her in detail. After he explained his interpretation, he bid her adieu, closed the bedroom door and climbed into bed for some much-needed rest. He must have been thoroughly exhausted from unabated anxiety, sleeping in the wilderness, skipping meals and exerting additional energy to avoid detection.⁷

As Marius slumbered in Fannia's estate, Minturnae's magistrates finally agreed that they must quickly obey Sulla's decree to kill Gaius Marius, but no one dared volunteer for the loathsome duty. None of them wished to be the person to slay the legendary saviour of Rome. In fact, they were unable to locate any citizen willing to perform the detestable deed. After some time, the magistrates eventually located a non-Roman soldier who agreed to execute Marius. Reports of his ethnicity vary. Some claimed that he was Gallic or Germanic, but others asserted that he may have been specifically Cimbric, one of the peoples that Marius had vanquished.⁸ Regardless of his nationality, the alien warrior mustered all of his courage, unsheathed his sword and quietly entered Marius' chamber as he rested. The aged commander awoke in the darkened room and, from his bed, stared fearlessly at the soldier. Allegedly, the barbarian witnessed terrifying fire emanating from Marius' stern eyes, and as the former consul confidently rose from his resting place, he boldly and defiantly questioned the trembling soldier in a booming voice, 'Fellow, darest thou kill Gaius Marius?' The assassin was paralyzed with fear, dropped his sword, and fled Marius' bedroom, loudly screaming, 'I cannot kill Gaius Marius!'⁹

The town's magistrates were flummoxed by the report of an armed soldier, likely in the prime of his life, timidly retreating in the face of an unarmed, elderly man in bed. However, their bewilderment quickly turned to shame as they felt overwhelmingly guilty for attempting to kill the great general who had once protected Rome from destruction.

They also empathized with his current woeful predicament. He was without friends, riches or even a thankful country, and he was hunted like a dangerous, rabid animal. After the failed execution attempt, the town's officials reconvened and reversed their initial decision, likely under the watchful eye of a multitude of locals who were agitating for Marius' liberation. The magistrates agreed to release Marius as a free man, but even then, they feared the gods' wrath for not aiding him in his time of need. One magistrate summed up the collective decision and shamefully uttered, 'So, then let him go where he will as an exile, to suffer elsewhere his allotted fate. And let us pray that the gods may not visit us with their displeasure for casting Marius out of our city in poverty and rags.'¹⁰

The magistrates then entered Marius' chamber and extended their apologies to the likely perplexed former consul. They provided him with clothing and money, and they decided to personally escort him towards the shore, where he would be allowed to board a ship to wherever he wished. Marius was beyond pleased to have survived his latest brush with death, but he was understandably disgusted by the magistrates' initial treachery. Nevertheless, he prepared to depart for his transport and exited the town with his guides. As they journeyed toward the coast, likely in awkward silence, Marius' contrite attendants were even willing to offend the gods for his sake. The most direct path to the sea was obstructed by a sacred grove named Marica. It was a holy location, and all items that were carried into it were required to be left in the copse. It appears that the magistrates provided Marius with luggage, because they languished over how to transport it around Marica without losing valuable time. Instead, they resolved to risk the gods' disfavour by boldly marching through the grove without leaving the baggage behind. Perhaps they believed that the gods would mercifully countenance irreverence if only it benefited Marius.¹¹

After crossing through Marica, the party reached a ship that had been prepared by a man named Belaeus, and Marius boarded, presumably while servants or even the repentant magistrates loaded his luggage. The town's leaders voiced their final goodbyes and likely petitioned once again for Marius' forgiveness as he weighed anchor and departed without demur. Marius must have been exceptionally thrilled to leave the town that nearly had him executed and to survive numerous close calls. Luckily for him, his good fortune continued. By chance, whether because of currents, the weather or the need to

restock supplies, his vessel landed at the island of Aenaria. There, he reunited with the companions who had become separated from him when they boarded different ships near Minturnae to escape Sulla's trackers. One can imagine the long, warm embrace between Marius and his stepson, Granius, who was likely extremely concerned that Marius had been captured or slain.¹²

Appian presented a different version of Marius' joyous reunion with his comrades. He claimed that when Marius was released from Minturnae, he was not charitably provided with a boat. Instead, he perilously ventured alone toward the coast and travelled only on rarely used roads to avoid being captured by Sulla's men. As he approached the sea, he discovered an abandoned hut where he decided to rest and await an opportunity. The once rich and powerful general covered his body with leaves and other vegetation to camouflage his bulky body, and he slumbered until he was alerted by a noise. An elderly fisherman was tending to his work on the coast while his small fishing boat was beached. Marius seized the chance and ran as fast as his aging legs could carry him in order to steal the craft, but the angler was determined to defend his humble vessel. Consequently, Marius and the old man quickly came to blows. After a short tussle, Marius subdued the fisherman, pushed his boat into the water as quickly as possible and hoisted the sail. Marius did not know where he was heading and had little control over where his boat would end up. Nevertheless, a storm blew his modest vessel out to sea, where he fortuitously neared an island where he discovered a ship manned by his stepson and friends. Regardless of the differing accounts, the Marians were happily rejoined, but they were still in great danger and needed a viable plan to reach their ultimate destination.¹³

They decided to continue to the Roman province of Africa, where many of Marius' veterans had settled, and they weighed anchor and unfurled their sails.¹⁴ While en route, they sensibly avoided harbour towns and any major populated localities to avert detection.¹⁵ However, after setting sail from Aenaria, they quickly depleted their water supplies, which were obviously essential. As a result, the seamen prudently guided their ship to Sicily to replenish their dry water vessels and made landfall on the western tip of Sicily close to Eryx, a mountainous coastal town that is now called Erice, less than five miles from Trapani. Marius likely expected a warm welcome in Sicily considering that he was friends with the governor, but only

trouble awaited the Marians in Eryx. A Roman quaestor in the region, who was Marius' ardent foe, had diligently prepared for the Marians' possible arrival. Once he learned of Marius' uninvited appearance on the island, he marshalled his resources and attempted to apprehend Marius. As the Marians were busy refilling their water containers, the quaestor ambushed the unsuspecting outcasts, killing sixteen of them and nearly seizing the general. In a panic, the surviving members rushed to their ship in a frenzy and swiftly shoved off, barely averting complete ruin.¹⁶

Following the deadly encounter, the seamen sailed south and eventually anchored at the island of Meninx, perhaps to take a break from the sea, gather provisions and carefully consider their options. Meninx was widely known in the ancient world as a major producer of a coveted dye created from sea snails. Today it is called Djerba, just off of the coast of Tunisia in the Gulf of Gabes. While moored in Meninx, Marius learned some very welcome news. He was told that his son, Marius the Younger, and some of his companions were alive. They had escaped from Rome unscathed and sailed to Numidia to respectfully plead for the North African king's aid. Marius was of course ecstatic that his beloved son was unharmed, and considering Marius' ties to the Numidian royal household, he was probably thrilled by his son's decision to travel to the kingdom.¹⁷

With the wonderful report of his son's safety, Marius and his travel partners set sail from Meninx to Carthage, which was much closer to Marius the Younger's location. Carthage was located in the Roman province of Africa, and Publius Sextilius governed the region. There was no bond of friendship or enmity between Sextilius and Marius, but the elderly statesman had groundlessly counted on him to be sympathetic and maybe even to become an ally. Marius' hopes were quickly dashed when his party landed in the vestiges of the once great Carthage, which had since been resettled by Romans. Sextilius dispatched one of his subordinates to deliver a cold message to Marius. When he met the Marians, he announced, 'Sextilius, the governor, forbids you, Marius, to set foot in Africa; if you do, he says he will put the decree of the Senate in execution, and treat you as an enemy to the Romans.' The governor's actions are eminently understandable. He refused to harbour Marius and risk violating the law and offending Sulla, but he also preferred not to execute Marius, given that many of the old general's allies and veterans were nearby. His only viable option was to force Marius to leave his province.

Upon hearing Sextilius' official directive, Marius absorbed the rejection's painful sting and must have been visibly discouraged. Once again, Marius was rejected by Rome and denied any aid. Marius passionately yearned to verbally lash out at the officer to express his pain, fury and bitterness, but instead, he prudently withheld his ire. After a tense, silent moment, Sextilius' subordinate requested Marius' response to the governor's apathetic decision. The old general hesitated, bit his sharp tongue, and countered, 'Go tell him that you have seen Gaius Marius sitting in exile among the ruins of Carthage.' By this period, Marius and Carthage, two great international powers, were similarly impotent and wholly vilified in Rome. Forsaken once more, Marius left Carthage.¹⁸ However, there seems to be some confusion as to how long Marius was there, because one ancient author wrote that Marius lived in poverty among Carthage's ruins in a humble hut. It is unclear as to whether he and his retinue resided there before they were confronted by Sextilius' officer or for a time thereafter. Regardless, it appears that Marius may have lived among the once great empire's remnants for a short period.¹⁹

Meanwhile, Marius the Younger was sheltered in Numidia from the sweeping Roman search parties. He purposefully landed there to seek the king's assistance, but the irresolute monarch was unsure how to handle the precarious situation. Numidia was a Roman client kingdom, meaning that the king obeyed Rome when asked but theoretically ruled independently of the Republic. In reality, he governed at the pleasure of the Roman people. By aiding and abetting the Marians, he knew that he could irreparably damage his relationship with Rome, but until he decided on a specific course of action, he allowed the younger Marius to remain in his kingdom. In time, Marius the Younger and his comrades became aware that the king's designs may be detrimental to their well-being, and they promptly decided to quit Numidia at once. However, the monarch created a series of excuses to force them to linger in the African kingdom, but they were wise to the king's nefarious intentions. Nevertheless, they were essentially the monarch's prisoners, but Marius the Younger happened upon some good luck. His pitiful position was sympathized by one of the king's concubines, and she became sexually attracted to him. She attempted to seduce the young man, but he initially rejected her advances. However, regardless of his wife in Rome, he ultimately surrendered to temptation and began an affair with the woman. The younger Marius wasn't merely seeking carnal gratification, although that was probably a large part of his

rationale. He shrewdly realized how helpful the royal concubine could be to him. Once he gained her favour, he induced the woman to conspire with them, and when a favourable opportunity arose, she helped him and his followers secretly escape from Numidia and unite with his father.

As the younger Marius fled from Numidia, he somehow learned of his father's location and set out to meet him. It isn't clear where the two parties rejoined, but it was on a beach somewhere in North Africa. When they both arrived at the rendezvous point, they saluted each other and were finally reunited. Marius probably clutched his son tightly and whispered heartening words to him as tears of joy trickled down his tired face. Both of the Mariuses had survived many harrowing hardships as hunted fugitives, and for a long period, they must have assumed the worst possible outcome for one another. Alas, while they were finally together, they were still far from safe. After exuberantly greeting each other and likely sharing incredible stories of their nearly disastrous journey, Marius spied two scorpions battling in the sand. Marius claimed that this was an unfavourable portent and that the newly joined parties should sail away with haste. After their reunion and abrupt departure, the Marians returned to land and moored on an island called Cercina, off the North African coast.²⁰

Upon making landfall, they noticed Numidian horsemen who were dispatched by their king to capture the Marians. Not much was documented about this brush with danger, but it was supposedly the most perilous threat that the *hostis* and his friends had yet experienced. Somehow, the wily Marians escaped from the horsemen unharmed.²¹ After they deserted the island, Marius and his retinue were purportedly denied asylum on any land in the Mediterranean, and therefore, they lived on a ship off the African coast throughout the winter, presumably only making landfall to briefly replenish their stores of necessities. However, this seems somewhat suspect, considering the large pockets of supporters that Marius had throughout Africa. Instead, he probably spent much of his time travelling to different supportive communities in the region and raising a military force. Regardless of where he spent the winter, before long, Marius' fortunes changed, and his exile was short-lived.²²

PROCONSUL

'Neither reverence for the gods, nor the indignation of men, nor the fear of odium for their acts existed any longer among them. After committing savage deeds they turned to godless sights.'

– Appian of Alexandria

As his consulship expired, Sulla departed to engage the belligerent King Mithridates of Pontus. His successors were Lucius Cornelius Cinna and Gnaeus Octavius. Cinna was a *populares* politician and a Social War veteran, and Octavius was widely considered to be an honourable *optimates* statesman. He was also a relative of the notyet-born Gaius Octavius, who became the future Emperor Augustus of Rome. Sulla did not fully trust Cinna, and before he departed to lead his highly envied command, he forced both consuls to swear an oath to uphold his laws, which they dutifully did.¹ However, with Sulla and his troops no longer in Rome to maintain the one-sided peace, the situation once again descended into political violence, in part, because of the discontent that sparked the Social War.²

Once Sulla was a safe distance away from Rome, Cinna quickly had charges brought up against him and proposed reorganizing the new citizens that were created in the Social War's aftermath. Instead of enlisting them into newly created tribes, which would vote last and have very little influence, he advocated for enrolling them into the previously existing thirty-five tribes. The consul's bill was really no different than the one that Sulpicius had sponsored. Once again, many of the old Roman citizens vigorously opposed the measure because it would limit their voting power, but it was a wildly popular proposal with the newly enfranchised Italians.³ It also appears that Cinna introduced a bill to recall Marius from his exile, but it was met with resistance and was unsuccessful.⁴

Cinna's consular colleague, Octavius, staunchly opposed the voting measure and probably the nullification of Marius' death sentence too. Nevertheless, when the date to consider Cinna's contentious proposal regarding the new citizens approached, the two opposing factions, many of whom were armed with knives, descended upon the forum to influence the bill's outcome. The Cinna bloc loudly demanded his proposition's passage, but it was blocked by numerous tribunes'

vetoed. This angered the already agitated crowd, and the new citizens began rioting and attacking the opposing sacrosanct tribunes. Octavius wasn't present for the tumultuous vote, but he was duly alerted to the violent outbreak. At once, he summoned a large force of men and marched on the forum. Octavius' faction collided with Cinna's mob, resulting in as many as 10,000 deaths. Following the violent encounter, the rioting subsided. After Cinna's painful defeat, he and his followers understandably fled the scene, and as they retreated through the Roman streets, Cinna offered freedom to any slave who joined his cause. However, none answered his desperate overtures. Nonetheless, he intended on returning, like Sulla, to assert his will and rid Rome of what he believed were tyrants.⁵

Octavius was wise to Cinna's schemes and sought to discredit him. In a constitutionally questionable move, he had him stripped of his consulship since he had abandoned Rome and illegally offered freedom to any slaves who aided his revolt. Octavius even abrogated Cinna's Roman citizenship. Subsequently, Lucius Cornelius Merula, who was a priest in the cult of Jupiter, was chosen in Cinna's stead to fill the newly vacated consulship. The two consuls spent much of their time painstakingly preparing for Cinna's inevitable return at the head of a mighty army. They fortified Rome and levied fresh troops from the surrounding faithful communities. They also recalled Gnaeus Pompeius to help them defend Rome. He had previously been granted proconsular authority and an army, which was encamped near the Adriatic Sea. However, the opportunistic Pompeius remained neutral for as long as possible, biding his time until he could determine which faction would provide him the best opportunities. He ultimately sided with Octavius and Merula, and they deployed him and his soldiers to Rome's northern gateway, the Colline Gate, to guard against Cinna's eventual advance.⁶

Cinna was dismayed by his political defeat, but he was undaunted by the loss. After he had safely withdrawn from Rome, he travelled to Campania, a fertile region in south-west Italy, and visited a Roman army's encampment in Capua to enlist their support. He relied on their pity as he addressed the troops and implored them to provide him assistance, passionately declaring:⁷

'From you, citizens, I received this authority. The people voted it to me; the Senate has taken it away from me without your consent. Although I am the sufferer by this wrong I grieve amid my own troubles equally for your sakes. What need is there that we should solicit the favour of the tribes in

*the elections hereafter? What need have we of you? Where will after this be your power in the assemblies, in the elections, in the choice of consuls, if you fail to confirm what you bestow, and whenever you give your decision fail to secure it.*⁸

In a compelling performance, Cinna laid prostrate before them until he was assured that the ploy was successful. As a result, the legionaries eagerly joined his campaign, but he may have won their loyalties because he corrupted the army's officers and promised great riches to the foot soldiers. Regardless of his tactics, they worked. While in Campania, he also began inciting sympathetic towns of new citizens to join his revolt. Through these methods, he raised funds to wage a civil war and recruited troops throughout Italy. One ancient historian estimated that when his forces were at full strength, he commanded thirty legions, more than 130,000 troops. While that was probably an exaggeration, he certainly assembled an incredibly impressive army, and more pleasant news awaited Cinna.⁹

Gaius Marius was informed of the dissent in Rome and the looming civil war, and he seized the opportunity to return home, defend his honour and inflict terror upon his hated enemies. He seethed with resentment and was transfixed by obtaining revenge, which was understandable. Marius had used a purely legal manoeuvre to transfer the Mithridatic command to himself, but following that event, in Marius' eyes, Sulla violated the constitution and turned against his homeland. Sulla had marched into Rome as an invading army, killed Romans in the process and illegally executed a sacrosanct tribune, Sulpicius. Beyond these highly prohibited actions, Sulla proceeded to declare Marius a *hostis*, which caused him to flee and repeatedly endure humiliating and perilous hardships. Because of all of this, the elder statesmen jumped at the chance to return to Rome, avenge his injuries and expel those whom he believed were corrupt officials.

Marius had most likely already been enrolling allies in his personal army, but upon learning about Cinna's situation, he surely redoubled his efforts. He at once recruited slaves, Italians and Mauretanian cavalry, but when combined, they totalled less than 1,000 men. Wasting no time, he and his fellow exiles then sailed for the coastal Etruscan city of Telamon – modern-day Talamone – where he must have had many allies. While in Etruria, he visited numerous communities, expounded his previous successes, promised to promote the locals' interests if they aided him and additionally offered freedom to any slaves who enlisted in his makeshift army. Marius was unkempt

and looked the part of a poverty-stricken exile. He hadn't even cut his hair since the day he was expelled from Rome. Between his beggarly appearance and his rousing overtures, 6,000 Etruscans volunteered to fight for Marius, and somehow he also acquired forty ships, all of which were prepared for the coming conflict with Consul Octavius.¹⁰

After Marius' initial preparations, the old general penned a letter to Cinna in which he described the force that he had raised and expressed his eagerness to follow the true consul's orders.¹¹ One of Cinna's subordinates, Sertorius, counselled Cinna against uniting with Marius. He worried that Marius would eclipse them in power and that the ageing general was blinded by revenge, which could only end poorly for them. Nevertheless, Cinna ignored Sertorius' legitimate concerns and invited the exile to join his growing camp.¹²

Marius then marched towards Cinna, even though he moved more gingerly in his old age. They joined forces and Cinna subsequently appointed Marius as one of his proconsuls. Cinna was thrilled to acquire more legionaries and a seasoned commander, but to have a national symbol like Marius also provided his endeavour with added legitimacy. However, Marius was much more than a figurehead. Once he entered Cinna's camp, he coordinated with the other generals, and using his boundless wealth of military experience and knowledge, he altered the overall strategy.¹³

When Cinna's and Marius' forces were marshalled, they were predominantly split into three main groups. Cinna and his lieutenant, Gnaeus Papirius Carbo, a plebeian politician and military man, took position outside Rome. Quintus Sertorius guarded the northern approach to the eternal city, and Marius departed for the sea. As a full-blown civil war crept closer, Marius and Cinna maintained their resolve, firmly believing that they were acting appropriately. While they considered many of Sulla's and Octavius' actions in Rome as unjustified and wildly illegal, they both most likely genuinely thought that they were acting well within the law and were defending Rome's constitution. Cinna was perhaps deposed from the consulship under unconstitutional methods, and Sulla had illegally marched on Rome, disobeyed Sulpicius' law, executed a tribune and reformed the government without legitimate sanction. Both Marius and Cinna were intent on instituting what they believed was constitutional order and regaining their dignity. Yet, they did so by following Sulla's poor example.¹⁴

With their armies in place, the first goals of Marius' and Cinna's

strategy were to prevent additional troops from coming to Octavius' and Merula's aid and to cut off Rome's food supply. To block any possible Gauls from joining the consuls, Cinna dispatched a contingent of legionaries to Ariminum, in north-eastern Italy on the Adriatic coast, not far from Ravenna. Today it is called Rimini. Meanwhile, Marius captured and plundered numerous harbour towns, including Ostia, to prevent any grain or troops from being imported to Rome and to commandeer additional resources for his war effort. While in Ostia, he supposedly allowed numerous townspeople to be unnecessarily killed, but if this is true, then they were probably considered combatants or Sulla's partisans. He also destroyed bridges and blocked river entrances, which severed the enemy's communication lines, inhibited their troop movements and blocked Rome's food imports. Once Marius was satisfied that Rome had few available grain sources, he departed to rendezvous with Cinna, who was stationed near Rome.¹⁵

Octavius and Merula were clearly outnumbered and outmanoeuvred. Sulla was already in the East and couldn't return to their aid. There was, however, another Roman army led by an able general, Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius, who was the son of Marius' former benefactor and friend turned foe. Metellus had been tasked with extinguishing the Social War's last embers. The Samnite alliance was still stubbornly waging war with Rome, and Metellus was diligently trying to bring them to heel. With a full-scale civil war appearing imminent, the consuls urged Metellus to make peace with the Samnites, regardless of the conditions, so that he could extricate his army and defend Rome from Cinna and Marius. However, Metellus considered the Samnites' peace terms entirely unpalatable, and he subsequently refused their offer. Marius viewed this as a golden opportunity. He and Cinna opened communications with the rebellious Samnites and shrewdly agreed to all of their demands in exchange for an alliance against the sitting consuls and Metellus. After conferring, the Samnites happily formed a partnership with them.¹⁶

Metellus put his efforts to subdue the Samnites on hold in order to aid Octavius and Merula against Marius and Cinna. As he focused his attentions to the looming war among Romans, many of his countrymen noisily clamoured for him to lead Rome's defence rather than Octavius, because Metellus was more accomplished militarily. When they enthusiastically expressed their desire to him, he was angered by their disrespectful request and ordered them to dutifully

serve their constitutional leaders. This riled many of the troops, who, as a result, defected to the Cinna and Marian camp, which was yet another blow to the beleaguered consuls. Eventually, Metellus realized the untenable situation's hopelessness and abandoned Rome.

Octavius tried to ignore the ill-fated state of affairs, and instead, he chose to believe in mystical prophecies. Long before this period, Rome had acquired a series of documents called the Sibylline Books, which were believed to be prophetic. During times of crisis, they were meticulously consulted in the hope that they would reveal the future, or at least the best courses of action. When they were reviewed at this time, Octavius was ambiguously told that the conflict could result in a favourable conclusion, which allayed his anxieties to a certain extent.¹⁷

While Octavius was busy interpreting the Sibylline Books, Marius and Cinna had been preparing for war. After seizing much of Rome's grain supplies and blockading the city, Marius and many of his troops returned to Rome, and he and Cinna strategically positioned themselves around the city. At first, Marius attempted to seize it through treachery as opposed to a risky military engagement. Earlier in Marius' long career, he had granted a man named Appius Claudius a valuable favour of some sort. By 87 BC, Claudius was a military tribune and guarded the Janiculum Hill – a large strategic hill just outside Rome's western end – on behalf of the consuls. Somehow, Marius opened communications with the military tribune, and the proconsul quickly reminded the man of the favour that he once bestowed upon him. As a result, Marius expected Claudius to reciprocate by permitting the Marians and Cinnans to enter the hill's defences and seize it unmolested. The military tribune obediently acquiesced to Marius' request and betrayed his consuls. When the details of their secret agreement were in place, a group of Marius' and Cinna's troops entered through an unguarded and open gate, but they enjoyed little success because Pompeius and Octavius observed their soldiers' movements. Consequently, they rushed to the hill's defence and quickly met Marius' and Cinna's forces. This resulted in a violent conflict, which left both sides smarting, but Marius and Cinna were beaten back and ultimately repulsed from the Janiculum. At that moment, whether it was a divine sign or just pure chance, a severe storm broke out, likely halting the fighting after the intruders had been expelled. However, the tempestuous weather continued to sour, and a powerful lightning bolt surged from the foreboding sky towards

the soaked ground near Rome and smote many aristocrats, including Gnaeus Pompeius. The death of one of Rome's premier generals, who lay lifeless on the smoldering and charred ground, must have inspired widespread apprehension within the blockaded city of Rome, but they were still unwilling to submit to Marius or Cinna.¹⁸

After failing to seize Rome or the Janiculum Hill via treachery, Marius continued his programme of slow starvation, even though both factions were stricken with an unknown infectious pestilence.¹⁹ Marius methodically captured other nearby towns, which had served as Roman grain stores. This worsened Rome's already dire situation. Once Marius seized Rome's remaining grain depots, the old general returned to Cinna's position near Rome. Marius and Cinna must have diligently reconnoitered the field and stared menacingly at their withering enemy, but there was no logical reason to commit themselves to battle. They outnumbered their foes, and Rome was slowly starving into submission. Unless an unforeseen variable emerged to save the consuls, Octavius and Merula would surely be defeated. However, for an unknown reason, Marius and Cinna withdrew from their close position around the eternal city to the Alban Mount, which was a little more than 10 miles south of Rome. Then, likely out of impatience, they offered to give battle to Octavius' forces, who turned down the invitation. After this anticlimactic episode, Cinna once again attempted to strengthen his position and weaken Rome's. He offered freedom to any Roman slave who joined his army. His first attempt at recruiting slaves had ended in dismal failure, but this second call was highly successful. A large number of slaves abandoned Rome and enrolled in Cinna's army. For the Roman defenders, their position had become unsustainable.

Without reasonable hope for a victory and with starvation slowly becoming a terrifying reality, the Senate tasked envoys with obtaining Cinna's requirements for peace. However, when the emissaries arrived at the Cinna and Marian bivouac, Cinna proved that they were unprepared to open discussions on his terms. When they entered his camp, he inquired as to whether they were addressing him as a sitting consul or just a mere citizen, but this question caught the senatorial representatives off guard. They weren't sure how to properly respond, since Cinna had been stripped of his consulship and replaced by Merula. Therefore, Cinna angrily dismissed them until they knew who they were addressing. As the peace talks temporarily derailed, more Romans exited the city and sided with Cinna. Many of these were

simply famished individuals who wanted nothing more than sustenance, but others were fair weather Romans who waited to see which faction was in the ascendant. As it became evident that Cinna and Marius would be victorious, they wisely chose to desert Rome and ingratiate themselves with the victors-apparent.

Meanwhile, Octavius was faced with a constitutional quandary. He was considered an honourable man who largely preferred to respect and adhere to Rome's constitution, laws and precedents, with some notable exceptions, but neither he nor the Senate could address Cinna as a consul. Octavius and Merula were recognized as consuls in Rome, and only two were constitutionally permitted to serve at any given time. The senatorial representatives knew better than to approach Cinna as a common citizen, because they would risk incurring his wrath. Their only recourse was to depose Merula, but he was a priest, likely a reputable man. It was improper to dismiss a sitting consul who had committed no offence. Nevertheless, they expediently and thanklessly removed Merula from his post.²⁰

After Merula was ousted from the consulship, the peace envoys returned to Cinna and subsequently answered that they were negotiating with him as an officially recognized consul. They claimed that they did not view him as a mere Roman citizen, even though he had been stripped of his citizenship earlier. Octavius knew that he had to accept whatever terms Cinna offered, no matter how humiliating and detrimental, but he instructed the senators to plead for mercy. The emissaries only requested that Cinna promise not to initiate a pogrom or permit any unnecessary killing, but Cinna stubbornly refused to agree to their humble petition, which was a foreboding sign. He did, however, swear that he would not be the direct source of anyone's murder, but he ominously warned that Octavius should avoid the forum in case an unfortunate fate awaited him. The senators, who realized that Marius was the mastermind behind Cinna, agreed to all of his demands, and a full-scale civil war was narrowly averted for the time being.

Upon finalizing the peace terms, the envoys invited the victors to enter Rome, and Cinna and his party proceeded through one of Rome's gates. However, with vengeance in his eyes and a sinister grin, the disdainful Marius stopped short of entering Rome. He exclaimed that he was still a *hostis*, and *hostes* weren't legally permitted to enter the city. Therefore, a measure was hastily introduced to the people to abolish Sulla's decree that had condemned Marius and his associates.

As the voting slowly commenced, Marius lingered impatiently beyond the city walls, but after only three or four blocs had voted on the proposal, he was unwilling to wait any longer. He subsequently ended his charade and triumphantly marched into Rome.²¹

Neither Cinna nor Marius were gracious victors. When they re-entered Rome in 87 BC, Cinna nullified Sulla's laws, which essentially returned the Mithridatic command to Marius. They also permitted their troops to plunder all those who had opposed them with impunity, but theft was the least of their crimes. Octavius obeyed Cinna's unambiguous demand to steer clear of the forum. He departed for the Janiculum Hill, where he sat in a consul's chair surrounded by his army's remnants. His associates urged him to leave Rome, but his dedication to his people and his office induced him to remain. As he lingered there, an officer from Cinna's and Marius' army, Gaius Marcius Censorinus, gathered together a cavalry unit and advanced on Octavius' position, likely at Cinna's direction. Again, Octavius' friends urgently pressed the consul to flee, but he bravely stayed. When Censorinus' troops arrived, Octavius' soldiers tangled with them, but Octavius awaited his fate patiently and honourably. When Censorinus' men gained the upper hand, Cinna's henchman approached the consul, who steadfastly refused to run, defend himself or even rise from his consular chair. Nevertheless, Censorinus ruthlessly severed Octavius' head from his body and delivered his skull to the vengeful Cinna, who hung it near the speaker's rostra in the forum. Allegedly, this was the first time that a consul's head was displayed in such a manner, but it clearly was not the last.²²

Marius was always flawed. He was jealous, often petty and driven by unbridled ambition and eventually greed. For the most part, these traits had been restrained enough for him to have a successful and largely commendable career, at least by the deteriorating Roman standards. Unfortunately for Marius' legacy, the final chapter of his life negated whatever good he had once achieved. Driven by murderous revenge, both Cinna and Marius transformed into bloody tyrants. Marius chiefly bore a grudge against Sulla, but he also blamed much of the senatorial elite and certain equestrians who stood by and approved of Sulla's actions, which had forced Marius to flee for his life as a lowly fugitive. After Marius finally returned to Rome, he was poised to mete out his version of justice against those who had wronged him. The aristocracy that had been Marius' bane for so long braced itself for his unrestrained vengeance.

Once Rome was firmly under their control, Marius and Cinna quickly dispatched agents to determine who had opposed them. Then, regardless of whether their enemies had actually committed a crime, the Marian and Cinna operatives were tasked with capturing and mercilessly slaying their purported foes without a trial.²³ Together, Marius and Cinna instituted a lawless purge of their perceived aristocratic and equestrian enemies. Anyone who had sided with Sulla, offended Marius or Cinna or was wealthy enough for an enemy to covet their property was at risk. As their body count rose, the murdered senators' expressionless heads were barbarically hung in the forum alongside Octavius' rotting skull, while others served as macabre ornaments in banquet halls.²⁴ Marius forbade burials of the condemned men. Consequently, the bodies of the damned were remorselessly strewn about on the streets, and animals ripped the decomposing bodies apart and consumed them, which was a disgraceful end that Romans believed echoed into the afterlife.²⁵

Marius and Cinna unsparingly executed a laundry list of affluent Romans, including Marcus Antonius, a famed orator and the grandfather of Mark Antony.²⁶ Antonius had cautiously fled from Rome to avoid being one of Marius' victims, and he secretly took refuge in a poor albeit friendly farmer's home. At first, Antonius' plan seemed like it may succeed, but one of the host's slaves mistakenly mentioned to an innkeeper that the great Marcus Antonius was staying at his master's estate. The hotelier quickly relayed the information to an ecstatic Marius as he was enjoying his supper, and he was visibly overcome with joy by the prospect of personally slaying the famous orator. He shouted with cheer, loudly clapped and nearly leapt from his chair. He even informed his associates that he intended on killing the nobleman himself, but his colleagues convinced Marius to allow someone else to execute the man. As a result, an officer named Annius and a handful of legionaries were ordered to carry out the foul deed. Annius sent his troops inside the farmhouse to slay Antonius, but the soldiers were hypnotized by Antonius' dazzling oratory. Wondering why his subordinates had not yet returned, Annius entered the villa to investigate the situation. As he marched into Antonius' chamber and perceived what was transpiring, he viciously struck the patrician down while he was speaking.²⁷ As Antonius' last breaths escaped his body, Annius sharply chastised his subordinates for their cowardice. Then he delivered the orator's muted head to a gleeful Marius, who crudely placed it on his dinner table as a gruesome decoration.²⁸

Marius targeted another noble, Quintus Ancharius, but he devised a plan to obtain Marius' mercy. When the six-time consul was publicly offering sacrifices to the gods, Ancharius fearfully approached Marius, hoping that he might be in a forgiving mood during a solemn and holy ritual. He was dead wrong. As Marius was in the midst of a sacrifice, Ancharius neared and respectfully saluted him. Marius didn't reciprocate and instead callously ordered the surrounding guards to kill Ancharius, and then Marius finished his sacrifice and went about his day.²⁹ Following this episode, Marius' agents started equating the general's reactions to salutes and salutations as a final judgment. If someone perilously approached Marius and he didn't salute back or respond warmly, then they were at risk of being killed.³⁰

Eventually, the *Bardylaei* (translated as Spiked Boots), who served as Marius' bodyguard, became uncontrollable, even by Marius and Cinna. They, along with slaves who had joined Marius and Cinna, savagely murdered men at will, brutally raped their widows, injured the victims' progeny and plundered the dead's wealth. They had been sternly warned on several occasions to desist, but they failed to obey.³¹ Cinna and Sertorius, possibly alongside Marius, assembled the necessary legionary units, descended upon the *Bardylaei* and the unruly slaves, and they cut them all down to solve their lawlessness.³² This purportedly resulted in around 8,000 deaths.³³

Sulla's friends and relatives were some of the victims of the purge. Allegedly, his spouse and children were targeted, but they managed to elude Marius' and Cinna's agents and escape. It is doubtful that they would have been executed, considering that there is no evidence to suggest that any women or children were slain during the pogrom, but Marius and Cinna may have attempted to apprehend them to ensure Sulla's good behaviour. Nonetheless, Sulla's property was much less fortunate, as his home was destroyed and remaining property seized. In a final insult to Sulla, the vindictive Marius had him declared a *hostis*, just as Sulla had done to Marius not long before.³⁴

Sulla was unable to save many of his associates from the purge, but not every condemned Roman met a grisly end. The luckiest and wisest nobles fled Rome and sought refuge with Sulla in Greece. Others shrewdly used more creative means to assure their safety. In two varying accounts, an aristocrat named Cornutus plotted with his servants to fake his death. According to one version, Cornutus' assistants informed Marius' and Cinna's agents that their master had hung himself, which was considered incredibly dishonourable in

ancient Rome, but this alone didn't assure that the operatives believed their tale. Cornutus' loyal attendants also constructed a pyre and placed an already dead body upon it. When Marius' and Cinna's agents were within view, they set the pyre alight.³⁵ A slightly different tradition states that Cornutus' servants acquired the body of a deceased man, placed Cornutus' gold ring on the corpse's finger and hung the body. When Marius and Cinna's men observed the ring, they believed that the body belonged to Cornutus. Regardless of the two differing stories, Cornutus, aided by his clever servants, escaped uninjured into Gaul.³⁶

After many Romans were killed without trial or even valid charges during the purge, Marius and Cinna sought to provide some semblance of legitimacy to justify the deaths of their perceived enemies. Therefore, their foes were charged with false accusations so that they could be promptly convicted and executed, including the former consul Merula and Marius' old consular colleague, Catulus. Both men, however, refused to give Marius and Cinna the satisfaction of openly humiliating and killing them. They opted for what Romans believed to be an honourable death. Merula, whose only crime was replacing Cinna, beseeched the gods to protect Rome and to punish the Cinnans, and then he bled himself to death. Meanwhile, when asked about Catulus' fate, Marius' pithy response was, 'He must die.' Catulus knew that his trial wouldn't be fair, even though his only offences were that he was unappreciative to Marius and wasn't helpful to his former co-consul during his exile. Instead of enduring Marius' kangaroo court, he entered a newly built structure, built a great fire, sealed himself inside and died by asphyxiation.³⁷

This pogrom and Marius' bloodlust was proof of a marked change in the general who once desired to save Rome but by 87 BC massacred its citizens. Cinna had had enough of the murders, but Marius allegedly was not yet satisfied and diligently spent much of his time trying to discover others to implicate. However, this could be a revisionist view intended to further vilify Marius.³⁸ There was certainly plenty of violence, but Marius may not have been involved in a widespread massacre, as was presented by the ancient writers. Modern researchers have only discovered fourteen names of individuals who died during this period, and they can only attribute seven of those directly to Marius. Given that Cinna's and Marius' underlings appear to have killed many others with impunity for a short period, a great deal more than fourteen may have been

murdered. If they were, then their identities weren't sufficiently recorded. It seems highly likely that only the most affluent victims' names survived. Regardless of the discrepancies, some have asserted that Cinna may have been the cause of most of the violence, but attempting to determine who deserves the bulk of the blame entirely misses the point. Both Marius and Cinna were equally guilty of being instrumental in orchestrating a completely unnecessary killing spree.³⁹

As time progressed, news from Greece and Asia began to trickle into Rome, and Marius and Cinna marshalled their resources for a war with Mithridates and possibly Sulla. It seems likely that Marius was planning on leading troops against the Pontic king in the East and then potentially Sulla. Marius and Cinna probably determined that once King Mithridates was defeated, a civil war with Marius' old lieutenant was inevitable. Therefore, the Marians and Cinnans assiduously prepared for the eventual conflict with Sulla, but Marius' mental state was deteriorating. The thought of waging war against King Mithridates and his capable protégé and his seasoned army consumed the approximately 70-year-old's thoughts. His nights were haunted by terrors, and his mind was occupied by perpetual dread. The only remedy to his sleeplessness and troubled mind was frequent bouts of binge drinking, which others viewed as wholly inappropriate and unbecoming for a man of his age and stature. In his dreams, he repeatedly heard a voice say, 'The lion's lair is dangerous though the lion be not there.'⁴⁰ Perhaps he was suffering from a guilty conscience from his terrible deeds, or may have suffered from a progressive mental illness. His contemporaries may have also believed that there were supernatural elements to his unrelenting torment. Romans believed that the ghosts of murdered men and women sometimes remained on earth to doggedly haunt their killers or acquire final revenge by pressing others into action.⁴¹

Regardless of Marius' fragile mental state, late in 87 BC, elections were held, and Cinna and Marius were both easily elected to the consulship, to no one's surprise. Cinna attained his second consulship in a row, and Marius achieved his prophesized seventh consulship, which was more than any other Roman had earned up to that point.⁴² Purportedly, his first day in office was grievously marked by his decision to have a man named Sextus Lucinus flung to his death from the Tarpeian Rock for undocumented reasons. One following day, a courier arrived with an unknown message, which may have been an update on Sulla's or Mithridates' activities, but Marius may have never

even read it. He was racked with intense anxiety over what might be in the dispatch, and the overwhelming fear supposedly caused him to become seriously ill. His condition progressively worsened, and as he struggled to survive, his mind failed him. He believed that he was commanding mighty legions against King Mithridates, and he deliriously barked orders and battle cries as if he were in the field. It must have seemed apparent to the onlookers that the Mithridatic command that he was denied in life would carry him to his death. His condition continued to degenerate, and in early January, he was confined to his bed as the old general's exhausted body vainly laboured to stave off death. Nevertheless, seven days later, at around the age of 70, the celebrated general ultimately succumbed to an illness identified as pleurisy, and the headstrong consul drifted into death's darkness.⁴³

A different ancient writer claimed that, rather than dying of natural causes, Marius actually committed suicide to protect his homeland. He allegedly believed that a civil war with Sulla was inevitable, and he determined that his premature death would save Rome from the effects of civil strife. Therefore, he selflessly sacrificed himself for the Republic's well-being. However, this account has been largely considered false.⁴⁴ Regardless of how he died, reaching the age of 70 in ancient Rome was quite a feat, but it wasn't unheard of. For the Romans who survived to their tenth birthday, and many didn't, they could reasonably expect to live perhaps into their mid-forties. Considering that Marius lived more than seven decades, he outlived many expectations.⁴⁵

Following Marius' death, his body was prepared for its final resting place. Both burial and cremation were accepted methods of disposal in ancient Rome, and it was generally the family's tradition that prompted Romans to choose one means over the other. Less is known about the funerary practices of the poor masses, but it is much clearer for the rich. After a wealthy Roman had deceased, his/her eyes were carefully closed. Their body was respectfully prepared for its funeral. A loved one likely gave the deceased one last kiss goodbye, and an ornate burial mask was placed on the dead's face. There was a ceremonial procession, much like there is today, followed by an intricate funeral and an oration, probably similar to modern-day eulogies. Then the body was either interred into a tomb or a mausoleum, or it cremated on a funeral pyre. However, the final step of the funeral occurred outside Rome. By law, burials and cremations

were required to take place beyond the city's pomerium. Grand monuments sometimes marked the final resting place, and funerary games, including gladiatorial bouts, were sometimes celebrated in the deceased's honour.

Romans were finicky about interment. It was only considered to be a proper burial if all of the bones were entirely covered with dirt. If any part was visible, then according to the Romans, that could spell disaster in the afterlife. Denying someone a proper burial or cremation was considered a final insult, which was believed to haunt the deceased's 'soul' into the afterlife. Some Romans believed that the mythological Charon, the being that ferried the dead across the River Styx, would refuse to transport those who were denied a proper burial, leaving them in a sort of metaphysical limbo.⁴⁶

The details of Marius' funeral are nonexistent for the most part, other than that one of his allies named Gaius Flavius Fimbria attempted to murder another attendee during the ceremony.⁴⁷ Aside from the violent outburst and breach of decorum, the funeral continued without any notable incidents. It seems that Marius was likely buried rather than cremated, but there is some confusion over this.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, a man of his stature, wealth and popularity among the commoners most likely enjoyed an elaborate funeral, especially considering that his ally, Cinna, was still in power. It is highly probable that he was given an elegant burial mask, a lengthy funeral oration and was interred into an expensive mausoleum, and the funerary guests may have even enjoyed gladiatorial games. Regardless of his burial's uncertain details, unfortunately, this was not the last time that Romans would observe Marius' remains.⁴⁹

Following Marius' death, Rome needed to install a suffect consul to fill the recently vacated consulship, and Lucius Valerius Flaccus, a patrician known for his avarice, was appointed to that position. He assumed the role and governed alongside his co-consul, Cinna, and for a time, a false sense of peace likely reigned. However, it was short-lived.⁵⁰

SULLA

‘The soothsayers declared that a brave man, of rare courage and surpassing appearance, was to take the government in hand and free the city from its present troubles.’

– *Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus*

Meanwhile, Sulla had left Rome behind to lead his legions against the belligerent King Mithridates of Pontus. It is unlikely that Sulla sincerely believed that matters were truly settled in Rome, even though Cinna and Octavius both swore oaths to uphold his laws. The political system continued to progressively degenerate from peaceful discourse to open murders, gang violence and even overt sedition. As a result, Sulla must have expected some sort of forceful backlash to his unparalleled and highly illegal decision to march on Rome and the increased violence that he caused. Nonetheless, he departed to fulfill his appointment, defeat Mithridates and hopefully obtain immense glory and wealth.¹

Mithridates’ forces had overwhelmed much of the East, including Roman Asia, Bithynia, Cappadocia and large swathes of Greece and Macedonia.² Consequently, Sulla travelled with haste to eject the Pontic armies and reassert Rome’s dwindling influence. As the proconsul approached Greece with his troops, many of the city-states in his path dispatched deferential envoys to warmly welcome him and express their unwavering support for the Roman cause. However, Athens conspicuously failed to do the same. The cradle of democracy was firmly under the influence of a tyrant named Aristion who was staunchly allied with Mithridates, and Athens also served as the Pontic military’s strategic regional command post. Its walled port, Piraeus, was additionally held by one of Mithridates’ most capable commanders, Archelaus, and it served as their local naval harbour.

After an initial abortive attempt to seize Piraeus, Sulla understood that the Mithridatic War could potentially turn into a protracted and costly conflict. The general needed as much wealth as he could possibly acquire to fund expensive military operations, siege engines and other necessities. So long as Rome recognized his command, he could expect to receive some resources, but Sulla likely determined that he needed much more to challenge Mithridates. Nevertheless, not

long after he departed, the political winds shifted and Rome fell into the hands of the Cinnan and Marian partisans, who refused to supply his legions. To help fund his upcoming campaign, Sulla confiscated much of the local Greek temples' treasures with a promise to repay the enormous debt.³

Flush with newly acquired funds, Sulla then returned his focus to Athens, laying siege to it and blocking all supplies and provisions from entering the great city. Before long, the Athenians were stricken with hunger and were forced to eat boiled shoes and even resort to cannibalism.⁴ After some time, the Athenians could no longer bear the blockade's burdens, and they convincingly pleaded with the tyrant, Aristion, to end the conflict and come to peaceful terms with the proconsul. Eventually, Aristion begrudgingly relented and dispatched emissaries to confer with Sulla, but the result was not productive. The envoys presented excuses and spoke about Athens' history, but Sulla quickly interrupted them and exclaimed, 'Be off, my dear Sirs, and take these speeches with you; for I was not sent to Athens by the Romans to learn its history, but to subdue its rebels.' Aristion's representatives consequently returned to Athens empty-handed.⁵

With peace talks breaking down, Sulla fortuitously acquired a valuable piece of intelligence. His soldiers overheard elderly Athenians discussing a lightly defended segment of their walls, and this was subsequently reported to the proconsul. Wasting no time, Sulla ordered his troops to breach the wall at the weak point. As they relentlessly attacked Athens' vulnerability, the Roman soldiers successfully entered the city and quickly gained the upper hand. By the Calends of March (1 March), 86 BC, Athens, with the exception of the Acropolis, finally fell to Rome. Aristion fearfully fled to the defensible Acropolis, where he held out for some time. Meanwhile, Sulla permitted his legionaries to ruthlessly kill and plunder with impunity, to such an extent that it was reported that the slain Athenians' blood gushed forth in a terrifying spectacle from the Dipylon Gate, Athens' largest gateway. After the excessive slaughter, Sulla halted the superfluous violence and forgave the remaining Athenians.

Piraeus subsequently fell to Sulla, but Archelaus' Pontic forces that were stationed there simply sailed away, mostly unharmed. The proconsul had no navy capable of challenging the Mithridatic armada, and as a result, the flotilla withdrew unscathed. The powerful Mithridatic fleet continued to rule the local seas virtually unopposed.

With Piraeus deserted, Sulla entered the placid port, ordering his troops to burn most of the harbour and destroy its armoury to prevent Piraeus from ever serving as an enemy haven again. The Roman general scored two successive victories, but it was merely a negligible setback for the mighty Mithridatic coalition, which was still in control of much of the East, commanded enormous forces and freely roamed the seas uncontested.

To deal with the Roman advances, a Pontic general by the name of Taxiles marched towards Sulla at the head of around 110,000 soldiers. He additionally ordered Archelaus to join him in the endeavour, but Archelaus wasn't eager to engage in a risky offensive against Sulla. He preferred to starve the Romans into submission, but he obeyed Taxiles' summons anyway. As they mobilized to confront Sulla, the Roman weighed his options and chose a new course of action. Rather than lingering near Athens, the proconsul wisely changed direction and led his legionaries north-west of the city into the area known as Boeotia to ensure that his army wouldn't be inhibited by lack of food. This was a more fertile area, which could supply his legions with ample necessities, but it was also a risky move because the landscape favoured the Mithridatic military tactics. Nonetheless, both forces jockeyed for position in the region.⁶

Eventually, Sulla's troops occupied a Boeotian hill named Philoboetus and anxiously prepared to clash with the Mithridatic army. However, his legionaries were too fearful to face such a great multitude. Therefore, the battle never commenced. Disappointed, Sulla resolved to spend considerable time thoroughly training his soldiers and giving them laborious chores until they were ready and willing to battle the impressive Pontic coalition.⁷ Later in 86 BC, when Sulla was finally satisfied with his soldiers' ability, he coaxed Archelaus and Taxiles' combined forces into an ill-advised battle near the Boeotian settlement of Chaeronea. Sulla commanded no less than 35,000 legionaries compared to as many as 120,000 Pontic troops.⁸ Regardless of the armies' vast numerical disparities, Sulla masterfully outwitted and outmanoeuvred Pontus' forces, and the Mithridatic army was utterly slaughtered. Taxiles was captured, but Archelaus escaped with the survivors.⁹ Supposedly, more than 100,000 enemy soldiers perished while only twelve Romans fell in the battle, but these casualty estimates should not be taken too seriously.¹⁰

The overwhelming loss was devastating for Pontus, but Mithridates still refused to concede defeat. However, soon thereafter, he faced a

possible war on a second front against another foe. After Marius died, Lucius Valerius Flaccus was appointed as suffect consul to serve the remainder of Marius' consular term. One of his tasks was to travel to the East to defeat Mithridates, because the ruling faction in Rome considered Sulla and his mission entirely illegitimate. If and when Flaccus defeated the Pontic king, then he was likely expected to turn on Sulla and neutralize him and his army. Sulla was a direct threat to the new order in Rome. It was assumed that if Sulla vanquished the Mithridatic forces, then he might once again return to Rome and march on the eternal city. The faction controlling the state obviously wished to prevent this dangerous possibility.

Meanwhile, a new Mithridatic army had been hastily dispatched to Boeotia to defeat Sulla's victorious legions and expel them from Pontus' growing sphere of influence. Its commanders determined that the area around Orchomenus in Boeotia was best suited for the Pontic army, and it was there that they offered to fight the Romans. Sulla eagerly accepted the invitation, and the two armies met near Orchomenus. Once again, Sulla exhibited his military cunning and leadership as he routed Mithridatic forces that far outnumbered his own, leaving tens of thousands of Pontic troops dead. The Mithridatic army suffered another comprehensive defeat and debilitating slaughter, which promptly opened peace talks with Archelaus that ultimately floundered.¹¹

Perhaps around this time, refugees fleeing Cinna's and Marius' executions arrived at Sulla's camp seeking his protection, which he kindly provided, but he couldn't address the source of these problems until the war with Mithridates was settled. He continued to incessantly harry the king's interests, but the situation became even more complex. Consul Flaccus, who hailed from a faction that thoroughly opposed Sulla, had landed in the East and likewise moved against Mithridates. However, a mutiny occurred in Flaccus' army. One of the consul's deputies was a Roman named Gaius Flavius Fimbria. He was once Marius' consular colleague in 104 BC, and he treacherously orchestrated Flaccus' murder. Flaccus was widely disliked for his greed and the heavy-handed punishments that he heartlessly doled out. As a result, his death probably wasn't mourned by many in the ranks. Fimbria barbarously ordered Flaccus' head to be severed from its torso. The skull was discarded in the sea, and his headless body was shamefully abandoned without a burial. Fimbria became the *de facto* commander of Flaccus' legions. Following the

episode, Fimbria dogged the Pontic king. He even nearly captured Mithridates in Pitane, causing the king such great concern that he desperately reopened negotiations with Sulla. The proconsul was also concerned. He worried that Fimbria might defeat the Pontic forces and receive the credit. So, Sulla proposed very lenient peace terms to the Pontic king, who readily accepted them. Consequently, the Mithridatic war ended in 84 BC, but the conditions of the surrender were so favourable to Pontus that Sulla's own legionaries cried foul.¹²

As part of the agreement, King Mithridates' forces were required to vacate Roman Asia, Greece and Paphlagonia. The Pontic general, Archelaus, surrendered his impressive naval fleet, and Mithridates was compelled to provide a minimum of seventy fully equipped and armoured ships to Rome whenever Sulla demanded them. Furthermore, Pontus was obligated to recognize the rightful kings of Cappadocia and Bithynia, which is what had originally sparked the conflict. Finally, Mithridates was forced to pay an indemnity of at least 2,000 talents to Rome, but this was a paltry sum compared to Pontus' great wealth. Considering the king's egregious crimes, including murdering as many as 150,000 Romans and Italians, invading Roman territory and conquering Rome's allies, Mithridates got off incredibly lightly.¹³

Upon solidifying the peace terms, Sulla next focused on Fimbria's soldiers, and he marched at once to attack them. However, Fimbria's troops clearly understood that they were no match for Sulla's experienced legions, and they also had no desire to wage war against their countrymen. Fimbria sensed his troops' growing concerns and sought to cement their support. To ensure his army's questionable loyalty, Fimbria kept attempting to force his soldiers to swear allegiance to him, but many refused and began disloyally joining Sulla's camp. Upon realizing the situation's hopelessness, Fimbria fled and killed himself with the help of a slave, and his army defected wholesale to Sulla's camp, leaving Sulla as the undisputed master in the region.¹⁴

With both his foreign and local domestic foes neutralized, Sulla turned his attention towards other pressing issues. He subdued the Thracian tribes that had aided Mithridates, reorganized Asia and Greece and meted out harsh punishments to the cities that had perpetrated crimes against the Romans. Sulla probably ordered the nobles who had been responsible for massacring Romans and Italians to be executed, and he levied colossal fines on the cities that were

involved. The huge pecuniary penalties reduced many towns to poverty, but they allowed Sulla to reward his troops, prepare for his invasion of Rome and probably even repay his debts to the Greek shrines.¹⁵

Meanwhile, the consuls of 84 BC were Lucius Cornelius Cinna and Gnaeus Papirius Carbo. Together, they had been diligently preparing to meet Sulla on the battlefield by raising funds and levying troops. The consuls decided to take the war to Sulla rather than permitting him to march into the Italian peninsula uncontested. When they assembled their legionaries and ordered them to prepare to sail for Greece, the first detachment traversed the seas without a problem, but the second group was hit by a violent storm. Upon learning of their comrades' fates, the legionaries remaining in Italy confronted the consuls with open defiance. The soldiers couldn't have been excited about the prospect of battling their countrymen, and they refused to risk their lives on a perilous sea voyage. Their contempt for the consuls' plan was made apparent when they stoned Consul Cinna to death. Understanding that the soldiers were unwilling to meet Sulla in Greece, Carbo prudently cancelled the expedition, entrenched his positions in Italy and determined to patiently wait for Sulla to arrive.¹⁶

Sulla was likely already bent on avenging his friends' deaths in Rome, removing the anti-Sullan faction controlling the government and altering Rome's constitution to match his ideal form of governance. Yet, before his plan seemed irreversible, he and others in Rome exchanged numerous missives purportedly seeking a way to avoid the looming civil war, but unfortunately, no settlement was obtained. In Sulla's mind, a civil war was probably unavoidable because it was the only way to accomplish his goals. After he wrapped up his business in Greece and Asia, he resolved to invade his homeland for a second time and impose his will at the point of a gladius. However, his offensive was not simply to save Rome from the pro-Marian and Cinnan factions but to enforce his own wishes, seek revenge without sanction and slay any perceived enemies.¹⁷

He shipped off from Greece in 83 BC and arrived in the southern Italian harbour town of Brundisium, but he had more allies than just those in his legions. He already knew that there were a number of prominent Romans who unswervingly supported his cause. Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius (the son of Marius' old friend), Marcus Licinius Crassus (the future triumvir) and eventually even Gnaeus Pompeius

(Pompey the Great) raised armies to support Sulla's illegal invasion. Crassus' father died during Marius' and Cinna's abhorrent spate of murders, which endeared the surviving Crassus to Sulla, but Pompeius likely joined Sulla's cause out of a cold calculation, believing that Sulla was likely to be victorious. Crassus and Pompeius descended from leading, respected Romans, but their future was even brighter. They eventually became two of the three most powerful men in Rome.

The consuls of 83 BC were Lucius Cornelius Scipio and Gaius Norbanus, who commanded large consular armies that they hoped would swiftly halt Sulla's inevitable advance and decisively conclude the imminent conflict. However, as the civil war commenced and progressed, the anti-Sullan faction's results were atrocious. The first substantial battle pitted Sulla against Norbanus near Capua, but Sulla's battle-hardened legionaries quickly routed the consul's raw troops, killing 7,000 of them. Sulla next turned towards Scipio's army in the vicinity of Teanum, but Sulla adroitly opened diplomatic channels to delay the battle. He cleverly used the lull in fighting to win over Scipio's army, which deserted their consul wholesale and joined Sulla's forces. Scipio was permitted to withdraw, but he quickly raised another force and was determined to avenge his humiliating loss of an entire consular army. Yet, his newly levied legionaries once again embarrassingly defected en masse to the Sullan faction.¹⁸

The anti-Sullans were prosecuting the civil war spectacularly poorly for many reasons. Marius and Cinna were both dead, which left only junior partners with limited experience to lead the complex effort. Their soldiers were similarly green, while Sulla's legionaries were seasoned veterans. Once in battle, they were no match for Sulla's experienced soldiers or his military cunning. Sulla was also an incredibly persuasive man, and he was sometimes lax as a commander and known to generously share the spoils of war with his troops. Most foot soldiers were likely troubled by the thought of fighting their comrades. Yet, when they were presented with an opportunity to switch their loyalties, it seemed logical that they would choose the most experienced faction, especially when their charming leader was known for lavishly sharing the spoils. As a result, the consuls were dogged by considerable defections.

Facing imminent disaster, Carbo, the titular leader of the anti-Sullan faction, was re-elected to the consulship for 82 BC along with Marius' son. The election of Gaius Marius the Younger was a keen political strategy that reaped quick benefits. Many of the elder Marius'

veterans and their children had probably remained neutral in the current conflict, but as soon as Marius' son was installed as consul, their firm dedication to the deceased general was likely apparent during the legionary recruitment drives. Having Marius' son siding with Carbo also provided an influential name and additional legitimacy to Carbo's effort, but Marius the Younger was only around 27 in 82 BC. He had served in the Social War under his father and Cato, but he had little or no notable military leadership experience. Nevertheless, he became one of Rome's two supreme commanders along with Carbo, who also sought other ways to bolster their odds at winning the war.¹⁹ Marius' calculating co-consul devised a plan to replace their thinning legionary ranks. To counter the distressing defeats and defections, Carbo successfully recruited Italian communities, including the Samnites who had been favourable to the elder Marius and Cinna, to fight for his cause.²⁰

Meanwhile, Sulla's legions and his lieutenants continued pouring through the countryside, capturing enemy strongholds and defeating armies vainly sent to oppose them, which weakened the anti-Sullan front even further. As Sulla advanced on Rome itself, Marius the Younger resolutely intended on forcing a decisive battle against him to end the floundering war. One night before they met, Sulla received a helpful dream in which he witnessed his former friend and mentor, Gaius Marius, warning the younger Marius that the following day would bring disaster. Sulla was heartened by this premonition, which he believed was sent by the gods and was proof that he would be victorious over the young Marius. After the next morning's daybreak, Sulla's troops exhaustedly dug entrenchments during a heavy rainstorm, and they were physically spent and visibly disorganized. Marius believed that the opportunity was ripe for a surprise attack on Sulla near the settlement of Sacriportus, but when he led the offensive, Sulla's legionaries quickly mobilized and bravely sallied forth. By most accounts, Marius held the advantage, but his assault disintegrated rapidly when many of his inexperienced soldiers wheeled around and retreated in the face of Sulla's counter-attack. With his army timidly withdrawing, Marius followed his fleeing soldiers to Praeneste, with Sulla in hot pursuit. Praeneste's inhabitants attempted to admit Marius' troops into the city, but upon observing Sulla's legionaries quickly approaching, they immediately shut the gate, leaving Marius and many of his soldiers beyond the city's defences. There was hope for Marius though. A rope was thrown over the wall, affixed to him, and the citizens pulled the consul to safety.

However, Sulla annihilated Marius' army that was stranded beyond Praeneste's walls.²¹ As many as 25,000 of Marius' men were systematically slaughtered, and 8,000 were captured. Only 15,000 managed to find sanctuary inside of Praeneste.²² Supposedly, as few as a mere twenty-three Sullans died in the battle, which again is probably an exaggeration. Nevertheless, from the safety of the city's walls, Marius the Younger grew increasingly paranoid as he waited in vain to be rescued.²³

Sulla continued north and met Carbo in a sizeable battle, which essentially resulted in a draw. Despite this inconclusive engagement, the bleeding continued for Carbo as Sulla and his deputies scored more victories and induced more defections. Following the string of discouraging setbacks, Carbo deserted his army in Italy and fled to Africa, and late in 82 BC, the war climaxed just outside Rome's Colline Gate. Sulla and Crassus squared off against a coalition of Samnites and other Italians who were aligned with Carbo. The fighting was so fierce that Sulla was forced to retreat and believed that the battle was lost, but he learned that his lieutenant, Crassus, did not withdraw. He held strong and bravely won the day. For the most part, the resistance in Italy against Sulla collapsed after this battle, but the conflict simmered for years outside the Italian peninsula.²⁴ Soon thereafter, many of the remaining leaders who had dared to oppose Sulla also succumbed to their unfortunate fates. Carbo was captured and executed, and Marius the Younger was contained in Praeneste. Realizing that it was only a matter of time before he was apprehended, humiliated and killed, he understandably tried to flee. Marius quietly traversed Praeneste's subterranean drainage system to locate a safe escape route, but he found Sulla's soldiers attentatively guarding every exit. At that moment, he sombrely accepted that breaking out of Praeneste wasn't a realistic option. Instead of falling into his enemy's hands, he resorted to suicide. Consequently, he and a friend decided to run full speed into each other's swords, but this effort was bungled and only left the consul wounded. In a final desperate attempt, Marius accomplished death with the help of a slave, but his enemies collected his remains.²⁵ His head was cleaved from his body and delivered to Sulla, who hung it near the speaker's rostra in the forum for all to see. He even mocked the decomposing skull, offering it the following advice: 'First learn to row, before you try to steer!'²⁶

Sulla was once again Rome's uncontested ruler. He assumed control over the capital and was bent on revenge. As generous and charming

as Sulla was to his loyal soldiers and adherents, he was equally tyrannical and violent to his hated enemies. When he victoriously strode into Rome, he promptly convened the Senate to address them. Meanwhile, his subordinates methodically massacred 6,000 prisoners of war nearby. The terrified Senate overheard the shrieks and cries for mercy, but he urged them not to mind the commotion because it was merely some criminals being reprimanded. This episode was a harbinger of the terror that was to reign.

When Praeneste finally fell to one of Sulla's officers, Quintus Lucretius Ofella, the Sullans creditably prepared to try the town's combatants in the court of law. Sulla decided to give each man an individual trial to prove his innocence before being sentenced to die. However, Sulla grew tired of the lengthy proceedings, which is understandable considering that there were roughly 12,000 people who were accused of crimes. To speed up the process, he independently decreed that all 12,000 were guilty and condemned them to die. Upon his declaration, they were all swiftly executed.²⁷

The vindictive Sulla bore grudges like no other, which Rome lamentably learned first-hand. Once firmly in power, he ordered his agents to kill Romans upon his command. Any person who sided with Marius or Cinna, aided Sulla's enemies or even offered them kind words was at risk of being executed and forfeiting their property. Murders abounded as Sulla's enemies were slain one by one without due process or even consulting juries or magistrates. Sulla unilaterally decided who lived and died without warning or valid justification. As the killing spree continued, one brave Roman named Gaius Metellus finally implored Sulla, 'We do not ask thee to free from punishment those whom thou hast determined to slay, but to free from suspense those whom thou hast determined to save.' The general considered the reasonable request, but he informed Metellus that he was unsure whom he would spare. In response, the worried Roman begged, 'Let us know whom thou intendest to punish.' Sulla acquiesced and was pleased to fulfill his request.²⁸

Sulla began posting lists in the forum of Romans whom he had condemned to die. The purge of his political enemies was called the proscriptions, and at that moment, they began in tragic earnest. In a public speech, Sulla declared that he intended executing every Roman who deserved the punishment, and those whom he forgot would be killed at a future date. Marius' allies were exterminated and private grudges were settled by the proscriptions. The first list included eighty

names. The second was comprised of 220, and the third was similar in number. The murderous proscriptions continued as Sulla's reign of terror gripped Rome.²⁹ No Marian partisan was safe, least of all Marius' relatives. The general's nephew, Marcus Marius Gratidianus, was captured by Sulla's party. His eyes were clawed out and his appendages were broken. In this fashion, Gratidianus endured a slow, agonizing death.³⁰ Even Marius' other nephew, Julius Caesar, found his name on the proscription lists, for no other reason than he was related to Marius and refused to divorce his wife, who happened to be Cinna's daughter. Caesar wisely went into hiding until his allies were able to acquire a pardon for the young man. After Sulla begrudgingly agreed to spare Caesar, he purportedly claimed that Caesar posed more of a danger to the Republic than Marius himself.³¹

When a man was proscribed, any Roman was permitted kill him with impunity and expect to receive two talents as a bounty from Sulla. The condemned men's property was also confiscated and sold at auction, often at a hefty discount.³² Sulla's deputy, Crassus, is remembered for adding at least one name to the lists for no other reason than he coveted the man's property, and he made a habit of purchasing condemned men's estates for nominal prices, which generated considerable profits. By exploiting the proscriptions, Crassus greatly enriched himself. It became common knowledge that the acquisition of riches was the impetus for certain individuals' death sentences.³³ A wealthy Roman named Quintus Aurelius discovered his name on the lists and dryly exclaimed, 'Ah! woe is me! My Alban estate is prosecuting me.' Aurelius had done no wrong other than to empathetically console Sulla's foes. Other names were posthumously added to the proscription lists to expediently justify their unsanctioned murders. The entire process was despicable, but Sulla and his cronies managed to corrupt a depraved operation even further.³⁴ When the bloody deeds were completed, the severed heads of the slain were inspected before the killers' payments were approved. Then the rotting skulls were displayed in the forum for all of Rome to view. The proscriptions continued unabated until an unknown number of Romans had been killed, which may have easily reached 2,000 deaths. While Marius' and Cinna's purge was equally immoral and unjustified, it paled in comparison to Sulla's extended bloody pogrom.³⁵

The living weren't the only ones at risk during this dark period of Roman history. With Marius and his son already dead, Sulla could not

exact the painful revenge that he intensely craved. Instead, he ordered all of Marius' statues and monuments to be destroyed. He banned henceforth all images of the seven-time consul, and through these many disgraceful methods, Sulla tried his best to eradicate Marius' memory, erase the great general's achievements and rewrite history. In a final insult, his subordinates disgracefully exhumed the great general. It was a shocking and morbid display in which Romans once again glimpsed their great hero in the flesh, or at least his remains if he was cremated. Supposedly, Marius' corpse was shamefully dragged about, abused and torn to pieces. Then the remainder of his body was simply discarded like litter. It was an ignominious end and the ultimate dishonour for the once-hero-turned-pariah of Rome.³⁶

Eventually, Sulla's voracious hunger for vengeance was sated at a great price, and his murderous schemes slowly turned towards reforming the government. He decided that to amend the Republic's constitution and protect himself, he needed to revive the office of the dictatorship, which had been in disuse for 120 years. At some point in 82 BC, he assumed the position and started to work on reforming the Republic into his ideal form of government. He decreed that he was immune from prosecution for any action that he had committed or may commit in the future. Furthermore, he granted himself unlimited power for as long as he saw fit, even though the office of the dictatorship was constitutionally limited to only six months. With most of his enemies dead or living in exile, and his legions supporting him, he could not be challenged.³⁷

Sulla saw the rising power of the tribunate as a cause of many of Rome's woes. He witnessed the post being abused repeatedly by his enemies, including Marius. Therefore, he limited the office's power substantially. Their veto powers were markedly curtailed. They no longer had the power to convene the Senate or introduce legislation.³⁸ The people's assemblies were also a source of many problems, in Sulla's point of view. They had been misused by radical tribunes to achieve goals not approved by the Senate. In response, he required that all legislation must first be approved by the Senate before the people could consider a measure. This greatly diminished the people's power while conversely increasing the Senate's influence. Sulla also wanted to prevent the meteoric rise of powerful young demagogues. As a result, he created a strict path governing the *cursus honorum* that dictated the requisite ages of office holders, the permissible sequence of offices and the time intervals in between holding such posts.

The Senate had been greatly empowered by Sulla, but its ranks were noticeably thin. Much of the Senate was vacant due to the civil wars and his own proscriptions, but Sulla had a remedy for this. He replenished the Senate's ranks with his own allies, and he hoped that they would ensure that his will and his new constitution would be obeyed once he retired. He additionally attempted to rid Rome of its grain dole because he believed that it was an illegitimate and dangerous path to political power over the masses. Even though he laboured to reform the republican form of government, once he was gone, his close allies quickly repealed many of his laws.³⁹

Shortly after Sulla enacted laws defining the *cursus honorum*, one of his former subordinates, Quintus Lucretius Ofella, declared his candidacy for the consulship. However, Ofella didn't technically qualify for the position because he had not fulfilled the office's requirements defined by Sulla. Instead of reacting sensibly, including forcibly preventing Ofella's illegal candidacy or arresting him, Sulla had him publicly murdered in the forum. Sulla explained to the Romans, 'Know, citizens, and learn from me, that I put to death Lucretius because he disobeyed me.' Under Sulla's administration, disobedience was often rewarded with death.⁴⁰

Following Marius' example, Sulla additionally rewarded his veterans by settling them on land that he had confiscated throughout the Italian peninsula. The veteran colonies served multiple purposes. The legionaries were settled in areas that hadn't been favourable to Sulla. By planting troops in these troublesome regions, he was assured that the locals would be well behaved. The colonies also rewarded his soldiers for their loyal service and guaranteed that they would remain his steadfast supporters for years to come.⁴¹

Once Sulla was satisfied that he had created a more stable republic and most of his enemies were dead or living in exile, he shockingly announced that he was stepping down from his post of dictator. However, he declared that he was seeking the consulship to guide the Republic through its first year under the new system of governance. Unsurprisingly, he was elected to the state's top post of 80 BC alongside Metellus Pius. Considering that Sulla still practically wielded as much authority as before and he was wholly unchallenged, this was more or less an extension of his dictatorship. Yet, when his consulship expired, he willingly surrendered his power and entered into partial retirement.⁴²

He spent his waning days with his friends and lovers while still

engaging in occasional public business, but poor health quickly caught up with him. He suffered from ulcerated bowels, which increasingly worsened until his body was infested with worms. Doctors and assistants attempted every remedy to rid him of the parasites, but they reproduced quicker than they could be removed. They left his body covered with the worms' excretions and a putrid stench, which baths and medicine were unable to cure. One day in 78 BC, a corrupt official angered him, and as Sulla furiously screamed for the man to be strangled to death, Sulla began to haemorrhage and blood spewed from his mouth, likely as a consequence of his chronic alcohol abuse. He became fevered, quickly fell into delirium and died the next day. To avoid the same dishonour that he had inflicted upon Marius' unfortunate corpse, Sulla was purportedly cremated. Throngs of Romans were present when the former dictator was ceremonially disposed of by a grand funeral pyre. A monument was erected and dedicated to Sulla on the Campus Martius, with an epitaph supposedly written by Sulla himself. It roughly read, 'No friend ever surpassed him in kindness, and no enemy in mischief.'⁴³

Marius and Sulla were both dead, but their potent legacies lived on. However, the chain reaction that they sparked had begun a domino effect that spelled doom for the Republic. Sulla may have been consumed by flames, but his lieutenants, Pompey and Crassus, survived. As their influence quickly grew, they sat atop the burgeoning Roman Empire, but they were eventually compelled to share power with a third player. He was a young upstart turned power broker who was an avid admirer of Marius as well as his nephew, Julius Caesar. The three men were Marius' and Sulla's heirs to Rome, and they continued their predecessors' systematic destruction of the Republic.

TRIUMVIRATE

‘The man you are so eager to save will one day deal the death blow to the cause of the aristocracy, which you have joined with me in upholding; for in this Caesar there is more than one Marius.’

– *Lucius Cornelius Sulla*

Following Sulla’s death, the Roman Republic remained firmly under his faction’s control, but the government still remained largely dysfunctional. However, a new generation of politicians were jockeying for power. In this period, Rome witnessed the gradual rise of three strong men: Pompey, Crassus and, eventually, Julius Caesar. Pompey quickly became a celebrated general and Rome’s favourite son. During Rome’s previous civil war, he boldly raised and led a force without any legal sanction in support of Sulla, and he proved to be a reliable commander. He achieved success in the Italian peninsula, and in 82 BC and 81 BC, he brought Sicily and Africa into Sulla’s growing sphere of influence.¹ Meanwhile, in 82 BC, Crassus was the undisputed hero of the battle at the Colline Gate, which essentially marked the end of full-scale civil strife in Italy, but the youthful Pompey was the one who largely received Rome’s adulation and Sulla’s recognition. In fact, it was the dictator who dubbed him Pompeius Magnus, or Pompey the Great, to effectively appease the youngster and publicly recognize his valuable contributions. Yet, this honorary accolade was not enough. The young man continually badgered Sulla to grant him a magnificent triumph, even though he didn’t legally qualify for one. Eventually, the annoyed dictator relented and permitted Pompey the Great the honour.² However, following the triumph, Pompey ultimately had a falling out with Sulla because they supported different candidates for the consulship of 78 BC.³

Crassus also fell out with Sulla by deplorably adding at least one innocent man’s name to the proscription lists simply to profit from his demise. Nevertheless, Crassus, always driven by his insatiable avarice, continued accumulating an enormous empire of wealth as well as political capital.⁴ Pompey, on other hand, was dispatched to Spain in 77 BC to aid in the ongoing campaign to extinguish the civil war’s remaining embers. A crafty Roman named Sertorius skillfully led a successful guerrilla war against Rome and frequently stymied Pompey,

but Sertorius created hostile enemies among the Spanish locals and was assassinated, leaving his troops without an adept leader. Sertorius' successor was no match for the Romans, who were led, in part, by the ambitious Pompey, and the rebels were eventually suppressed.⁵

In 73 BC, while Pompey was still settling matters in Spain, a surprisingly stout rebellion erupted in the Italian peninsula. A band of gladiators led by the slave Spartacus escaped from their masters and sparked a major revolt that humiliated a series of Roman commanders. Drove of slaves flocked to his standard and joined his insurrection. With his ranks swelling and his keen military mind, Spartacus repeatedly outwitted the unprepared Romans. As the revolt seriously threatened to spiral completely out of control, Crassus was tasked with subduing the slaves and returning order to the Roman countryside. At first, one of his subordinates disobeyed his orders and suffered an embarrassing defeat at the hands of the cunning Spartacus. So, to instill order and discipline, Crassus instituted the cruel ancient penalty of decimation, whereby one in ten legionaries from a disgraced unit were executed. Following the decimation, disobedience was understandably no longer a lingering problem, and then Crassus put his legionaries to work. Using his military knowledge and impressive building skills, Crassus cleverly attempted to outfox the rebels. By 71 BC, Spartacus and Crassus clashed in a major set-piece battle, but the Roman was ultimately victorious and slaughtered the majority of the slaves.⁶ Crassus captured 6,000 survivors and summarily ordered them to be crucified. Their bodies dotted the road from Capua all the way to Rome.⁷ At least 5,000 rebels managed to escape the initial carnage, but most of them were intercepted by Pompey, who was returning from Spain. He easily quashed the rebellion's remnants and quickly informed the Senate that Crassus had won a battle against the slaves, but it was he who actually ended the war, which guaranteed long-lasting enmity between Crassus and Pompey.⁸ Nonetheless, Pompey was awarded a triumph for his victories in Spain while Crassus was given a lesser honour known as an ovation for his laudable service against Spartacus.⁹

Following Pompey's and Crassus' jubilant return to Rome, they both successfully campaigned for the consulship of 70 BC, but their term was mostly uneventful and fruitless, other than repealing some of Sulla's reforms, including restoring many of the tribenary powers. They both spitefully opposed one another at nearly every turn.

Considering the rift caused by the war with Spartacus and Pompey's and Crassus' bitter rivalry, it's unsurprising that their consulship was mostly unremarkable. After their term expired, Pompey quietly retreated away from much of the public light and likely focused on shepherding his personal investments.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Crassus pursued public as well as private enterprises, became one of the most influential men in Roman politics and amassed riches unmatched by any in Rome.¹¹

A few years later, Pompey returned to the spotlight as Roman shipping interests and grain supplies were harried by an unrelenting pirate epidemic. He was awarded three years of unprecedented power so that he could sweep the seas of the naval marauders, but he solved the crisis in as little as forty days, which was an impressive accomplishment.¹² He was once again one of the most celebrated men in Rome, but he desired more and soon found an opportunity. By the mid-seventies BC, the hostile King Mithridates had obstinately re-emerged as a dogged Roman foe and was embroiled in a conflict with the Republic. The Roman general, Lucius Licinius Lucullus, was prosecuting the war against Mithridates and had scored serious victories against his forces, but Pompey enviously wished to lead the war effort. Following Marius' example, Pompey arranged for the coveted command to be transferred to him, and once he was in control, he defeated Mithridates. By 63 BC, the old king realized that his future was doomed, and after years of persistently inoculating himself to the world's known toxins, he vainly attempted suicide by swallowing poison. He shared his dose with his two daughters, but the cocktail was ineffective on the monarch. Therefore, in differing accounts, Mithridates either stabbed himself or passionately begged an associate to finish what the poisons failed to do, and the attendant dutifully obeyed and struck him down. Following Mithridates' fall and death, Pompey, as expected, received the credit. Yet, it was somewhat undeserved, given that his predecessor, Lucullus, had previously inflicted severe defeats upon Mithridates.¹³ Nevertheless, Pompey formed Pontus into a Roman province, but before and after Mithridates' death, Pompey also marched through much of the East, forming provinces and rewarding friendly client kings with additional territories.¹⁴ He even advanced into Judea to settle an internal conflict in the Jewish state, which led to increased Roman involvement in the region for hundreds of years. After his impressive tour, he decided to return home, and upon his anticipated arrival from the East, he was awarded his third triumph.¹⁵

As Pompey and Crassus rose to new heights, an ambitious young *populares* named Gaius Julius Caesar attempted to navigate the *cursus honorum*. He was of patrician stock, and his family tree was linked to Marius, the Trojan prince Aeneas and the goddess Venus. However, considering his clan's prestigious origins, his direct familial line had underachieved politically and financially for some time, but Caesar was undaunted by his family's recent history. By borrowing prodigious sums of money, attaching himself to the great Marius and forging a relationship with the wealthy Crassus, Caesar was able to climb the political ladder. Along the way, he surprised many by publicly revering his uncle, Gaius Marius, but given that Sulla had demonized Marius and the ruling class thoroughly loathed the deceased general, this was largely inadvisable.¹⁶ In 69 BC, Caesar was elected as one of Rome's quaestors. Shortly thereafter, he was informed that his aunt, Marius' widow, Julia, had died of natural causes.¹⁷ He resolved to provide a grand public funeral worthy of the well-respected patrician woman, but he irked much of the ruling elite in the process. Caesar gave a funeral oration in the forum, which did as much to honour Julia as promote his own lineage and career, but in the funeral procession, Caesar shockingly exhibited images of Marius, regardless of the danger. This was the first time that these paintings and sculptures had been openly observed since Sulla attempted to destroy them. Marius was still massively popular among the proletariat, and many of them admiringly gazed upon Marius' likeness and viewed Caesar's bold actions as honorable, which expediently served to bolster Caesar's base of support. The funeral passed without negative repercussions, but it wasn't Caesar's last attempt to revive Marius' legacy and garner Rome's support in the process.¹⁸

By 65 BC, during Crassus' term as a censor, Caesar was serving as an aedile and had quietly collected many of Marius' monuments and statues, which Sulla had spitefully ordered to be destroyed. He also commissioned the creation of additional images of his deceased uncle. Once they were completed, Caesar and his accomplices covertly transported the trophies of Marius' victories and his statues into Rome under the cover of darkness. Then they were lavishly adorned with gold and placed on the Capitoline Hill, despite the official attempts to eliminate and suppress such images. The next morning, Rome was abuzz over Caesar's audacious spectacle, but a crowd of Marian partisans quickly gathered around the monuments. Caesar's gestures and the sight of the sculptures moved the crowd to tears as they stood before the display in awe and reverence. This once again incensed the

aristocracy, but Caesar suffered no punishment or retribution. It was a risky gamble, but it endeared the commoners and Marian partisans to Caesar. He shrewdly calculated the dangers and rewards of such actions, and he was pleased by the benefits.¹⁹

By around 60 BC, Rome looked outwardly prosperous and had swelled, approaching a million citizens, but Sulla's constitutional reforms had failed to cure the ailing republic. Political violence and demagoguery were no longer periodic exceptions but the norm, and the Roman Republic was increasingly malfunctioning. Even Rome's two leading men, Crassus and Pompey, were unable to secure the swift passage of their respective pet projects. Pompey had been lobbying Rome to ratify his eastern settlements following his Mithridatic War, but its passage was hindered. Pompey had also promised to reward his soldiers with free land, just as Marius had done, but he was unable to facilitate the bill's passage.²⁰ He was greatly loved by the proletariat and was immensely popular, but he wasn't an exceptionally talented politician. Crassus, on the other hand, was more capable, but even with his skills and endless wealth, it appears that he was also incapable of forcing some of his measures into law. He had probably been advocating for a public bailout of the tax-farming industry. He and his allies had likely invested in government tax collecting contracts, but they unwisely overbid on the agreements. Many of the investors had been noisily clamouring for partial debt forgiveness on these contracts to ensure acceptable profit margins, but they had been unsuccessful up to this point.²¹

The Roman legislative system was a logjam, and regardless of their individual power, neither Pompey nor Crassus could consistently impose their will on their own. Combined, however, the two rivals could be a mighty force, but they were often fiercely at odds with one another. Nevertheless, if they united, then they still needed a talented ally in the executive branch to help guarantee their bills' passage. Coincidentally, Crassus' friend, Julius Caesar, was seeking the consulship of 59 BC, and after Caesar was elected to the post, he realized that he desperately needed assistance to fend off his political enemies and have a successful consulship. Therefore, he reconciled Pompey and Crassus, and the three Romans combined, with Caesar being the junior partner, to form a grand secret alliance to achieve their goals. To guarantee the members' ongoing loyalties, they swore oaths to only support measures that the three unanimously backed. This alliance was the formation of the First Triumvirate. When they

were united, they were a force that was entirely unmatched, and when their wills were working in unison, they essentially controlled the state.²² However, Pompey's devotion to the partnership appeared to be the weakest, especially after his bills were passed. To solidify the alliance and assure Pompey's continued cooperation, Caesar proposed that Pompey marry his daughter, Julia, and Pompey accepted the offer and promptly took Julia's hand in marriage, which prolonged the three men's partnership.²³

Caesar's co-consul, Marcus Calpurnius Bibulus, and the Senate tirelessly attempted to stymie Caesar's ambitious agenda. The Senate frequently balked at many of Caesar's proposals, and eventually, Bibulus astonishingly declared their consular term's remaining days to be sacred, which meant that public business was forbidden. Bibulus hoped to use this unusual manoeuvre to impede Caesar's programme, but with his strong-willed allies in lock step, Caesar cavalierly defied both his co-consul and the Senate, proceeding as though he was Rome's sole executive. Regardless of the repeated attempts to derail his agenda, Caesar had a productive consulship, and the triumvirate was wildly successful from the triumvirs' point of view. Pompey and Crassus both witnessed their measures enacted.²⁴ Caesar passed a bill granting land to the poor and obtained a coveted assignment, which began as his consulship expired. For a period of five years rather than one, he was tasked with commanding four legions and governing not one but three provinces: Cisalpine Gaul, Transalpine Gaul and Illyricum. Caesar purposefully chose these provinces for specific reasons. Some Romans were convinced that certain Gallic tribes might invade their homeland through one of these provinces, and Caesar believed that if their fears came to fruition, then it would provide an opportunity for a great war that might allow him to repay his inordinate debts and augment his own prestige. As Caesar departed to fulfill his governorship, the triumvirate continued to be the most powerful, cohesive force in Roman politics, but the republican government continued its decline nonetheless. It was corrupted by rampant bribery and violence, sometimes at the triumvirate's direction.²⁵

Before long, Caesar assumed control over his provinces, and without much hesitation, he began waging war on many different Gallic peoples, sometimes under dubious justifications. After enjoying initial successes there, he experienced several significant reverses. He finally realized that he couldn't complete the subjugation of the Gallic

tribes in his allotted five-year term. However, he refused to be replaced and passively allow someone else to receive the credit or reap the benefits of the war that he had been prosecuting. Faced with the possibility of losing his command, he turned to his allies, Pompey and Crassus. The triumvirs' dedication to their partnership had diminished to some extent, and consequently, they reaffirmed the triumvirate. This time it was different though. Caesar was no longer a junior partner. He had grown more popular and powerful since the triumvirate's initial formation. According to the terms of their new agreement, Caesar was to remain in Gaul, and Pompey and Crassus were to campaign for the consulship. Once elected, they were to extend Caesar's Gallic command by another five years, and they intended to appoint themselves to lucrative governorships.²⁶

Pompey and Crassus were unsurprisingly elected to the consulship of 55 BC, and the trio's plan worked just as they had planned. Caesar's appointment was renewed, and Pompey and Crassus both acquired promising overseas posts. Crassus was assigned to Syria, which provided him a tempting opportunity to provoke a war with the Parthian Empire. If it transpired, then he hoped that it would be highly profitable and improve his military reputation, which was considered insignificant compared to Pompey's.²⁷ Meanwhile, Crassus' co-consul was appointed to govern both Spanish provinces and Africa, but contrary to precedent, he chose to rule Spain and Africa through his subordinates and remain in Rome to closely watch over the ailing Republic.

The triumvirate once again appeared to be a success, but the arrangement couldn't endure in perpetuity. By 54 BC, Pompey's wife, Julia, passed away during childbirth. Their union had originally been arranged for political purposes, like many marriages of the period, but during their time together, they fell sincerely in love with one another. When she perished, Pompey was thoroughly devastated, and Caesar likewise felt the sharp sting of his own child's premature end. Once the shock of her death slowly began to dissipate, Caesar's calculating mind returned to politics and salvaging the triumvirate. Crassus was a closer ally to Caesar than Pompey, but the only ties Caesar had with Pompey were an oath and the marriage to his daughter. The union with Julia was by far the most important bond between Caesar and Pompey, but when that link expired, the partnership between the two started to wither. In time, Pompey chose to remarry, but his bride hailed from an aristocratic family,

which firmly placed Pompey among the *optimates*. Caesar was a *populares*, and the two subsequently grew apart.²⁸

Meanwhile, Crassus prepared for his governorship and military campaign against the Parthians. He rashly departed for the East, but it proved to be a fatal mistake. In 53 BC, he allowed his forces to engage the Parthians in an ill-advised battle near Carrhae, close to the border of modern-day Turkey and Syria. The battle at Carrhae was a colossal Roman disaster, and the Parthians killed Caesar's friend and fellow triumvir as well as the majority of Crassus' soldiers, possibly as many as 20,000 legionaries. A select few managed to escape, including a young nobleman named Cassius, who later played an integral role in Caesar's life. Within a short period of time, the once powerful triumvirate that had tightly governed the state instantaneously disintegrated following Crassus' and Julia's untimely deaths.²⁹

The triumvirate had served as an effective mechanism. It provided a conduit for influencing the government and passing self-serving legislation, and it may have also prolonged the ailing Republic's life. Nonetheless, it was a perversion of the Roman form of governance, and it was created to selfishly protect and promote three men's personal interests and assert their dominance over the state. However, with the three strong men working in concert with each other, they were able to keep the terminal state from descending into further chaos, even though the real Republic had long been subverted and hardly existed. Beneath the triumvirate were gangs of ruffians who competed for political control, unscrupulous politicians and frequent displays of unfettered violence. As the constitution was ignored, the government became a means to personal ends for the powerful, and promises of free grain, debt forgiveness and complimentary farmland mollified the masses. Without the coordination of the three-headed monster, the government increasingly floundered.

Caesar eventually achieved lasting victory over the tenacious Gallic tribes. In 52 BC, the protracted conflict climaxed at Alesia, near modern-day Alise-Sainte-Reine in France. In a dazzling engagement, he vanquished the Gallic federation's charismatic leader, Vercingetorix. During the roughly eight-year war, Caesar claimed to have killed an astounding one million men and enslaved a host of barbarians. Following the conflict's conclusion, he became immensely wealthy.³⁰ However, as his appointment appeared to be drawing to a close, he was presented with a quandary. His governorship provided him with immunity from prosecution, but he had committed some

actions of questionable legality during his consulship and had been publicly accused of impropriety. As a result, he was concerned that he might face prosecution and perhaps a conviction when he returned to Rome. The Senate began debating the topic of ordering Caesar to disband his army and return to the capital. Given that the Gallic War had been concluded and Caesar's appointment was winding down, this wouldn't have been an exceptional request. In fact, all governors were eventually required to relinquish their command once their term expired. However, Caesar's only protection from the Senate, Pompey and prosecution was his seasoned army, and he consequently refused to surrender his only bargaining chip. At first, he attempted to find a compromise with the Senate, but they weren't willing to cater to requests, which ultimately turned into ominous threats. With the situation becoming dangerously unmanageable, his loyal soldiers were eventually declared public enemies. Seeing that his future was not guaranteed to be freed of prosecution, he followed the illegal footsteps of Sulla and Marius and marched on Rome. As he crossed the Rubicon River in 49 BC, he supposedly declared, 'the die is cast', and Rome once again descended into a civil war with familiar roots. Sulla's deputy, Pompey, sided with most of the Senate and commanded their war effort, while Marius' *populares* nephew led his troops against them.³¹

In response to Caesar's unexpected advance, most of his opposition practically deserted Rome, and since it was relatively unguarded, he wasted no time capturing the capital. When he arrived, he emptied the Roman treasury to fund the civil war that he had provoked, but there were no mass executions like Marius and Sulla had deplorably conducted. Caesar preferred peaceful clemency over bloody massacres, which won him great acclaim and was an excellent recruiting method.³² Meanwhile, Pompey prudently withdrew to Greece to raise fresh forces capable of challenging Caesar, who, in turn, journeyed east to confront Pompey. In 48 BC, they met in a decisive battle at Pharsalus in central Greece, where Caesar bested his former partner, and Pompey subsequently fled to Egypt to regroup.³³ He was, however, assassinated on the Egyptian King Ptolemy XIII's orders. The legendary Pompey the Great was dead at 58 years old, but the civil war continued nonetheless in Africa and Spain.³⁴ During the next few years, Caesar extinguished the last vestiges of the civil war through a series of military engagements and his policy of reconciliation and clemency.³⁵

When the conflict drew to a close, barring some holdouts, Caesar was unquestionably Rome's master, and he followed Sulla's autocratic example. He was appointed to the dictatorship for an unconstitutional and unprecedented ten-year term and set out to reform Rome's government. However, Caesar apparently determined that a ten-year term as dictator was insufficient. He later assumed the position of dictator in perpetuity, thinking Sulla a fool for surrendering ultimate power.³⁶

AMATIUS

‘There was a certain pseudo-Marius in Rome named Amatius. He pretended to be a grandson of Marius, and for this reason was very popular with the masses.’

– Appian of Alexandria

Marius’ nephew, Julius Caesar, was not the only claimant to his enviable legacy, which was still respected by many and largely influential years after the seven-time consul’s death. As late as 45 BC, a mysterious character emerged in Rome who claimed direct lineage to the deceased general. The ancient sources refer to him using various names, including Amatius, Chamates and Herophilus. Allegedly, this fellow was an eye doctor who professed to be the son of Gaius Marius the Younger, even though no other evidence exists to suggest that he ever fathered a child. While Amatius garnered remarkable support, many influential Romans doubted his authenticity.¹ Nonetheless, this pseudo-Marius not only heralded his Marian descent but also demanded to be recognized as Julius Caesar’s cousin.²

Much of the timeline of Amatius’ life is shrouded in uncertainty, save a few well-documented incidents, and as a result, little is known about him. He seems to have been a well-spoken and persuasive man who was likely educated, either institutionally or self-taught.³ It appears that shortly after he abruptly surfaced, he acquired an impressive following throughout the Italian peninsula. He visited many of Marius’ veterans and their families, and they eagerly embraced him as Marius’ authentic descendant and heir. Before long, the veterans and their relatives even adopted Amatius as their patron, which proves how strongly they believed in the man. He also experienced success in and around the capital. Many of the *collegia*, essentially ancient business guilds, likewise accepted the oculist as Marius’ veritable grandson, increasing the obscure man’s stature.⁴

The extant sources covering Amatius are scant, but the earliest documentation comes from the famed orator and jurist, Cicero. Around 18 May 45 BC, Cicero received a letter from a man, claiming to be Marius’ grandson, who was soliciting the attorney’s representation for an unknown matter. Cicero was a renowned lawyer,

and Romans frequently requested his proficient counsel. However, for some undocumented reason, Cicero chose not to involve himself in Amatius' legal dispute. It isn't clear whether Cicero was disinterested in Amatius' case, wished to avoid being unnecessarily entangled with Julius Caesar or just preferred not to validate Amatius' genealogical claims. Cicero was an adept politician who wished to avoid involvement in the issue for some reason. Nevertheless, the seasoned statesman politely responded to Amatius that if he was a member of the Caesarian household, then he had no need of his legal assistance. He should simply contact his cousin, Julius Caesar, since he was the head of state and could quickly remedy any problems that he faced. This was either very sound advice or just a politic method of shrugging off a nuisance.⁵

Whether he was heeding Cicero's advice or merely seeking official recognition from Caesar for another reason, Amatius attempted to insert himself into the Caesarian family. Caesar was currently in Spain attempting to finally stamp out the ongoing civil war's remaining resistance, and he was accompanied by his great nephew, Gaius Octavius, the future Emperor Augustus. However, the youngster departed from Spain before Caesar, and in September 45 BC, he arrived in Rome where he met Amatius. Octavius was greeted by a sizeable crowd on the Janiculum Hill. Patiently waiting there was Amatius, surrounded by fawning adherents, and when Octavius arrived, Amatius eloquently produced a speech, presented his claims and asked Octavius to recognize him as a relative. It's quite clear that Octavius was sceptical of the oculist and was placed in a difficult situation. Amatius received considerable support from the commoners who gathered around him, and some unnamed female members of the Caesarian household even clamoured for Octavius to acknowledge Amatius as a kinsman. Certainly, Octavius didn't wish to upset the proletariat nor his female relatives, but he did have cause for concern. His most respected female relatives, including his mother, remained doubtful about Amatius' genealogical claims. Furthermore, Octavius was still a young man who was hardly the head of the family. Therefore, he chose not to unnecessarily reject nor accept a possible notable relative. He explained that Caesar was the head of the state and household, and therefore, Caesar made the family's decisions, not himself. Amatius needed to comprehensively convince Caesar of his authenticity, which saved Octavius from making a decision that would surely upset at least one party, the commoners or his family. He also went a step further and sternly warned Amatius not to return with any

additional requests that were only appropriate for family members. However, his answer was deemed entirely insufficient by Amatius, who followed the young man home, incessantly entreating him to accept him as a relative, but to no avail.⁶

Later that month, Amatius finally gained an audience with Caesar when he returned from Spain. After defeating Pompey's oldest son, Gnaeus Pompeius, in a hard-fought battle, Caesar triumphantly arrived in Rome and hosted a lavish celebration in his gardens to commemorate his victory. Amatius was present at Caesar's festivity and was followed by a horde of supporters nearly as large as Caesar's, which surely generated apprehension in the brilliant general and statesman. The two probably conversed, but the content of their discussion, if it indeed occurred, is unknown. However, Caesar's conclusion was obvious. He either did not accept Amatius as a genuine relative, was troubled by his impressive following, viewed him as a distraction or simply tired of him. After their brief encounter, Caesar decisively resolved to banish Amatius from Italy, and apparently, he departed without any major incidents.⁷

Amatius' goals were not apparent, other than to be recognized as Marius' grandson and a member of the ascendant Caesarian household. Marius had once been one of the richest men in the world, but much of his wealth had been confiscated during Sulla's dictatorship. Perhaps Amatius hoped for some kind of reparations or to even have his supposed grandfather's property and wealth reinstated and given to him. This seems like a highly improbable scenario, since thousands of Romans had their property seized by the state during the proscriptions without their family being fairly recompensed. It is probable that, like most humans, Amatius simply wanted wealth and power. If he was a pretender, then he surely wished that the Marius name would provide a broad base of support and that Caesar would use his influence and vast funds to promote his own career. He could have hoped for a senior military position under Caesar or aid in climbing the *cursus honorum*, which often enriched and empowered individuals. With a Marius-Caesar connection, there really was no limit. However, for the time being, Caesar steadfastly refused to help Amatius.

Regardless of his aims, Amatius' exile was short-lived. Not long after he was banished from Italy, Caesar was preparing to lead Rome's legions in a punitive expedition against the Parthians for slaughtering Marcus Licinius Crassus and his army. The campaign, however, never

came to fruition because Caesar was murdered. A plot formed against him for a multitude of reasons. He had assumed the monarch-like position of dictator in perpetuity, and he increasingly accepted excessive honours more fit for a demi-god than a man, which riled many of his countrymen. As the civil war appeared to wind down, he acquired influential enemies in every corner of Rome. Many Pompeian sympathizers survived and vindictively wished to see Caesar's downfall, but his trusted inner circle was also comprised of would-be enemies. Certain Caesarian partisans bore bitter grudges against him for his policy of clemency, and a few idealistic republicans wanted to oust the dictator and reinstate a purely republican government. The combination of these disgruntled Romans spelled doom for the dictator, and a corps of aristocrats secretly formed a conspiracy to assassinate Caesar. During a Senate meeting on the Ides of March (15 March) in 44 BC, which was just before Caesar's scheduled departure, a group of conspirators, some of whom he believed were his dear friends, surrounded the dictator and attacked him. They brandished their sharpened daggers and thrust their knives into him wildly and indiscriminately. In the pandemonium that ensued, many of the senators even stabbed their colleagues by accident as they fumbled about, but Caesar defiantly struggled mightily against the senators, possibly even stabbing one with a stylus.⁸ Nevertheless, his defence was pointless. Caesar suffered twenty-three stab wounds, but only one was fatal. As Caesar vainly clung to life, he observed the many senators who were participating in the melee, one of whom was Marcus Junius Brutus, a staunch republican who was largely aligned with the *optimates*. He was also personally close with Caesar, who had engaged in an extended affair with his mother. As the brilliant general was slowly overtaken by death and noticed Brutus' presence, he gazed at him, and Caesar uttered his last words, 'You too, my child?'⁹ Minutes later, the all-powerful dictator lay lifeless in a pool of blood at the foot of Pompey the Great's statue. Another Marian had met an inglorious end.¹⁰

The commoners mourned the untimely death of their populist champion, while the Senate insulated itself from punishment by issuing amnesty to his assassins.¹¹ Soon thereafter, Mark Antony, one of Caesar's former deputies, delivered the dictator's funeral oration, whereby he urged the crowd to essentially ignore the Senate's decree. This speech effectively alienated him from the Senate and further endeared him to the proletariat.¹² Nevertheless, Caesar's body was ultimately consumed on a funeral pyre, but the fallout from his

assassination and the Republic's decaying nature was far from resolved.

Caesar's will surprisingly named Octavius as his heir and adopted son, which elevated the young man's standing, but that didn't imply that he was meant to inherit his adopted father's role as the head of state. Many others jockeyed for that coveted position, including the Senate and Mark Antony. A protracted and complex episode played out, with the senatorial faction, Mark Antony and Octavius all openly bickering and eventually warring among one another over avenging Caesar's death and gaining control of the state.¹³

Caesar's death provided Amatius with a chance to return to Rome and assume the role of his alleged cousin's avenger. Once again, his goals were not clear. Of course he wished to be viewed as seeking justice for Caesar, but what, if anything, did he expect to gain? While he had some claims to being related to Caesar, he couldn't have seriously expected to be accepted as his heir, especially considering that Caesar's will named Octavius as the primary beneficiary. Likewise, he couldn't have rationally believed that he would replace Caesar as head of state, considering that he likely had no political or military experience, and he would have had to compete with legitimate rivals including senators, Octavius and Caesar's lieutenants. He likely hoped to present himself as Caesar's avenger to win over the plebeian masses, who loved the dead dictator. With their backing, in addition to Marius' veterans and the *collegia*, Amatius could reasonably have ambitious political designs, which would have opened new avenues to power and wealth. Regardless of his motives, he arrived in Rome with great fanfare and found Caesar's supporters eager to join his crusade against his purported cousin's killers. Upon his return, he visited the location of Caesar's funeral pyre, where he constructed an altar to permit sacrifices in the dictator's honour.

During this period, it seems that Amatius swiftly mobilized much of his former base of support and recruited the Caesarian adherents by inciting them with promises of revenge. Within a short period of time, Amatius essentially created a large gang of dangerous ruffians who rioted and menaced Caesar's assassins. Gradually, the conspirators conveniently skipped town, many accepting overseas commissions. However, Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus, who were key participants in Caesar's assassination, remained in Rome as they awaited their coming governorships in Macedonia and Syria, respectively.¹⁴

Amatius and his rabble likely had schemes involving Brutus' and Cassius' deaths, but the Senate wished to protect the statesmen since they were rising political stars. To halt the clamorous commotion caused by Amatius and safeguard Caesar's conspirators, Antony, who was consul at the time, apprehended Amatius and ordered his execution without a trial around 14 April 44 BC.¹⁵ After Amatius was dead, Antony sordidly allowed Marius' alleged grandson to be callously punctured with a hook, whereby the corpse was likely dragged throughout the city and discarded in the Tiber River like sewage or common filth.¹⁶ The Senate acknowledged the execution's unscrupulous nature, but in their opinion, it at least served the purpose of protecting Brutus and Cassius, which granted Antony newfound senatorial respect. This lessened the Senate's disdain towards Antony, but this reprehensible act offended much of Rome's lower classes. The impoverished plebeians were astonished that Antony killed the man who sought retribution for Caesar's untimely death, something the proletariat greatly desired. Antony was, after all, one of Caesar's friends and supposedly a supporter of the commoners, but many of the plebeians believed that Antony had shamefully betrayed both Caesar and the proletariat.

Amatius' adherents were especially infuriated by Antony's lawlessness and dishonourable treatment of the man whom they believed was Caesar's cousin and Marius' grandson. In response, Amatius' angry followers mobilized and gained control of the forum. While they were there, they openly endorsed violence against Antony and demanded that Roman officials create and dedicate an altar to Amatius. According to the mob, the first order of business should be to offer a sacrifice to Caesar on the altar. The situation was becoming embarrassing and potentially dangerous, and Antony grew weary of the uproar and violent threats against his life. Therefore, he dispatched soldiers to scatter the mob. They mostly retreated, but a minority persistently defied Antony.

Amatius' remaining followers refused to meekly abandon their demands for justice for Caesar and Amatius, and Antony eventually responded violently to their tumult. The consul unleashed his legionaries again and killed those who refused to submissively acquiesce. The slaves and freedmen who were involved in the disorder were captured and sentenced to die. The slaves were crucified while the freedmen were flung to their death from the Tarpeian Rock. The widespread and noisy expressions of defiance and turbulence ceased at

last, but the commoners no longer viewed Antony fondly. In fact, he was thoroughly despised.¹⁷

The last notable claim to direct Marian descent was extinguished with Amatius' death, but the conversation continues regarding his ancestry. Unfortunately, without modern technology and access to Marius' and Amatius' preserved remains, it is impossible to say with certainty whether he was Marius the Younger's son or not. The ancient writers were unanimous in calling Amatius a fraud, and most modern scholars likewise believe that he was an imposter. In antiquity, Amatius was accused of being someone of low social rank, a runaway slave and even a freedman, any of which could be true. Yet, most of the authors who attempted to discredit him were from another era, the Imperial Period, which doesn't necessarily invalidate their claims. It just further removes them from the epoch and the under-documented episode that they wrote about, and without many sources or evidence, historical veracity usually becomes questionable as time progresses. However, most of the writers were, and still are, well-respected researchers and historians, even though ancient authors were more often concerned with artistic rhetoric than absolute truthfulness.¹⁸

Regardless of the limitations in determining the truth about Amatius, there is no surviving evidence suggesting that Marius the Younger and his wife, Licinia, sired a child. Moreover, Octavius' mother, Atia, and his aunt weren't convinced of Amatius' genuineness. They were related to Marius' wife, Julia, and it is plausible that they would have had a working knowledge of who their relatives were. Combined, much of the evidence casts serious doubts on Amatius' claims.¹⁹

Even Amatius' different names seem to counter his assertions. One modern historian theorized that two of the names given by ancient writers, Amatius and Herophilus, comprised his real full name, Amatius Herophilus. The theory goes that he was a slave named Herophilus, and when he was granted his freedom, he assumed the name of his former owner, Amatius, which was customary in the ancient world. It is also imaginable that Amatius wasn't even a freedman, but a runaway slave. If that was the case, then he may have assumed his owner's name to provide the pretence of being a freedman. Furthermore, Amatius Herophilus sounds suspiciously Greek, not Roman, which calls into question his authenticity, considering that the Marians clearly weren't Greek.²⁰

The case against Amatius is hardly beyond any reasonable doubt. The dearth of sources chronicling Marius the Younger's personal life simply does not prove that he never fathered a child with his wife. Considering how tumultuous the last years of Marius the Younger's life were, he and his wife could have bore a son unbeknownst to the ancient sources and most relatives. He could have also adopted a minor or even sired a bastard child, which could have accounted for Amatius' existence. Caesar's relatives might have had no knowledge of an illegitimate son or even an adoption if it happened near the time of Marius the Younger's death. However, a bastard's claims were legally very weak. Nevertheless, the etymological evidence against Amatius is also far from the death knell in the alleged grandson's assertions. No relative of Marius would have been wise to retain the general's name for themselves or their children after Sulla's bloody reign. He destroyed Marius' sculptures and proscribed practically anyone who ever rendered the old statesman aid. Simply being a relative of Marius may have warranted a death sentence in the dictator's eyes. Sulla's path of destruction seemed to ensure that the Marius name would be hidden if not extinct as a means of survival for any living relatives. If any Marians who were directly related to the great Marius survived, then they surely would have considered assuming fake identities and may have fled to Greece for safety, which could account for a Greek name like Amatius Herophilus. Furthermore, if Marius the Younger fathered an illegitimate child, perhaps with a Greek woman, then it would be understandable if his bastard son's name reflected that of the mother's family or owner, not Marius' name.²¹

Cicero's inconsistent statements and actions regarding Amatius also generate questions. Cicero was originally from Arpinum, which was Marius' birthplace, and he was even distantly related to the Marians. He also intimately knew most Roman power brokers and their relatives. With these connections, it seems plausible that he might have had an idea of the veracity of Amatius' genealogical assertions when he solicited legal aid. At that point, Cicero didn't ignore the letter, but he didn't respond by exposing Amatius' purported lies either, which would have been a justifiable response to a con artist. Instead, he politely wrote back, and if Amatius was truthful, then Cicero provided solid advice. Nevertheless, Cicero was the consummate politician, and his courteous reply may have been nothing more than a way to avoid unnecessarily offending him.²² However, Cicero eventually described Amatius as a pretender, but it was only after Amatius' death that Cicero did so and dubbed him 'that

runaway slave who had usurped the name of [Gaius] Marius'.²³ Cicero may have based that statement on rumours, or he could have had ulterior motives for degrading the man's standing, considering that Amatius was a foe of the Senate that Cicero so loved.²⁴

Interestingly, some Caesarian women excitedly accepted Amatius as a veritable relative, but it's certainly possible that they were hoodwinked into believing a con artist's lies. Atia and at least one other female relative reserved their judgment on Amatius, and Caesar himself never addressed the question. Instead, he conveniently exiled the man from Rome. If Amatius was an obvious fraud, then why didn't Caesar expose him as such to the public and his supporters? It is conceivable that there was simply no proof that he was a pretender. It is also possible that Caesar didn't believe that he had enough evidence to satisfactorily undermine Amatius' claims. Perhaps Caesar feared alienating many of the plebeians by publicly rejecting the man, but one would expect a sentence of banishment to equally incite Amatius' adherents. However, if Caesar was as certain as the ancient sources were that Amatius was, in fact, a fraud, then the evidence was surely compelling enough to sway most of the public, but it was never presented. Caesar may have exiled him without caring if they were relatives or not. Amatius' growing support base, which at times seemed to rival his own, or the man's constant annoyance may have been enough to merit his banishment.²⁵

Amatius rose from obscurity to fame in a short period of time, and the source of much of his ballooning influence came from the general's veterans and their families, Marius' former clients, the *collegia* and the urban plebeians. The speed and enthusiasm at which the veterans, clients and their descendants joined Amatius is striking. After touring the countryside, the unknown eye doctor became a quasicelebrity with a dedicated following, many of whom adopted him as their patron. Something about him must have persuaded thousands of people to accept him as an authentic descendant of Marius. Perhaps he was genuine, or maybe he was simply a persuasive speaker.

At this point, it is impossible to ascertain the truth behind the mysterious character. Either he was one of the most successful con men in history or he was legitimate. There is not enough evidence to close the case one way or another. However, it seems more than likely that there were valid, conclusive reasons that all historical sources, Julius Caesar, Gaius Octavius and some of the Caesarian women

rejected the man, but some lingering questions remain. There must have been enough doubt to sway Caesar and his confidants but not enough to convince Amatius' disciples and maybe the general public too. It seems highly probable that he was a pretender, but perhaps the Roman elites rejected him, in part, because they believed that after multiple civil wars and invading Roman armies, another Marius could only be harmful to Rome. Nonetheless, the last influential person claiming direct descent from Marius perished, but if nothing else, Amatius' rise to prominence proved that immense power and prestige was still attached to Marius' name more than forty years after the general's death.

PRINCIPATE

‘[Augustus] had found [Rome] of brick, but left it in marble.’

– *Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus*

Many Romans were stunned that Caesar’s will named his 18-year-old grandnephew, Octavius, as heir to the majority of his estate and his adopted son.¹ While this instantaneously granted Octavius immense wealth, influence and prestige, being his heir also had another perk. Following Caesar’s death, he was deified by an act of the Senate, which meant that Octavius became the son of a god and Marius the uncle of a deity.² After this conspicuous social promotion, Octavius quickly assumed his great uncle’s name and subsequently raised a private army for a possible new round of civil wars. During this precarious period, Rome braced itself for the inevitable violence, and political and military alliances were formed and re-formed but remained flexible and ever evolving. Nevertheless, for a brief time there was an uneasy peace. However, when Mark Antony marched his legionaries against a fellow Roman who refused to relinquish his governorship to him, Octavius actually sided with the Senate. Shortly thereafter, Octavius and the Republic’s consular armies squared off against Antony’s legionaries and routed them, and Antony retreated to safety, smarting from his loss.³

Not long after Antony’s decisive defeat, Rome’s fluid partnerships began shifting once again, and Octavius proved that he was not the Senate’s saviour after all. He and Antony shockingly agreed to become allies in order to obtain great power and defeat two of Caesar’s key senatorial conspirators, Brutus and Cassius, who were raising a large army in the East. Another of Caesar’s former lieutenants named Lepidus was also brought into the alliance, and the power-sharing agreement marked the beginning of Rome’s Second Triumvirate.⁴ Regrettably, the triumvirate wasn’t the only mechanism that Antony and Octavius revived. They wanted to rid themselves of political enemies, and they were in dire need of funds to bankroll the looming war with Brutus and Cassius. They chose a deplorable method to address both of these issues. To effectively neutralize their formidable foes and raise the necessary revenue, they instituted a fresh round of bloody proscriptions. The trio targeted their wealthy enemies, ordered

them to be slaughtered without due process and then seized their property. Many of Rome's leading men met despicable ends regardless of their innocence, including the famed orator and barrister, Marcus Tullius Cicero.⁵

When the triumvirs were satisfied that they had confiscated enough wealth and recruited the necessary legionaries, they set out to vanquish Brutus and Cassius. They met them near the Macedonian city of Philippi, where the conspirators' army was comprehensively defeated. Consequently, Brutus and Cassius killed themselves. With their enemies neutralized and relative peace established, the triumvirs withdrew to their respective corners of the empire but remained in control of the state. For a short period of time, it appeared that the Second Triumvirate could result in a successful protracted power-sharing agreement. However, by 36 BC, the third partner of the triumvirate, Lepidus, had a falling out with Octavius, who stripped him of his position of triumvir but left him to a private life of comfort.⁶ As time progressed, Octavius clearly desired unchallenged power, seeing Antony as an obstruction to his ambitious goals. Meanwhile, Antony dismissively looked down upon the young man as an annoyance. The two gradually drifted further apart until only enmity existed and reconciliation was impossible. Civil war was practically unavoidable, and Octavius and Antony clashed in another conflict among Romans. Octavius scored a major victory against Antony's forces, but Antony barely managed to escape. However, his efforts were futile. In 30 BC, he chose his only remaining honourable option, according to the Romans, and committed suicide, leaving Octavius as the singular head of the Roman state.⁷

One day in early 27 BC, after holding onto his unprecedented power, Octavius convened the Senate and made a surprise announcement. He claimed that he was relinquishing his immense authority and returning Rome to its republican roots.⁸ However, it was a ruse. Instead, Octavius established a new form of government that left him with unprecedented power and authority. He assumed the title of *princeps*, or first citizen. As *princeps*, he was permitted many honours and incredible influence over the state. Most importantly, he retained command over the vast majority of Rome's legionaries, but considering his influence among the proletariat and his enormous client list, his authority was unchallenged. He intended to retain the position of *princeps* for the remainder of his life, after which a new *princeps* of his choosing would succeed him. He wished for Rome to

appear to be functioning as a republic, but it was unmistakably under his control. The Roman government had finalized its long transition from a republic into an autocracy called the Principate, and Octavius became its first emperor. To cap off his many illustrious honours and authority, he was also given the cognomen Augustus, which has been translated to the 'Revered One'.⁹

The long-ailing Roman Republic finally ceased to exist, and after years of civil wars, bloody pogroms and fear of barbarian invasions, the majority of Romans were fine with that. They seemed pleased to surrender their form of government, rights and liberties for an autocratic state in exchange for peace, riches and entertainment. Regardless of what motivated the Romans to eagerly accept the Principate, Rome had grown so large that maintaining an effective republican government was difficult if not entirely impossible. As a result, Octavius instituted what he saw as the next logical conclusion for Rome: autocracy.

At first, most of the Empire continued to flourish during this period. In fact, much of the Principate's early days were called the *Pax Romana*, which means 'Roman peace', but this phrase is somewhat misleading. While civil strife was minimal in those days, foreign wars continued unabated as Rome eventually claimed the land stretching from modern-day Syria to England. However, even as it rapidly grew, the Empire was well protected because Rome was no longer defended by a temporary citizen militia. Instead, the Empire maintained an enormous standing army of professional soldiers who steadfastly guarded its borders and frequently invaded neighbouring lands.¹⁰

The *Pax Romana* was also marked by a period of economic prosperity. Rome enjoyed the fruits of a growing empire, productive mines and Augustus' propensity towards flooding the market with silver.¹¹ However, individuals still exploited the state. Influential Romans often inappropriately used the government as a means to wealth, often through despicable methods, as the affluent became much richer. The poor far outnumbered the mega-wealthy, but emperors took great pains to assuage the proletariat to prevent any uprisings. The result was a permanent constituency, which was dependent upon the government. Around 200,000 Romans or more, at any given time during the Principate, were mollified by free grain, and eventually, even pork, wine and oil were generously included in the dole.¹² They were also entertained by incredibly expensive spectacles, including chariot races, gladiatorial bouts, staged hunts

and dramatized naval battles. Rome was spoiled, entertained and fattened, but the new-found luxuries weren't free. Most of these benefits were funded by confiscating conquered nations' wealth, taxing Rome's inhabitants or by picking the public silver mines clean.¹³

The eternal city was also physically transformed. Augustus bragged that he 'found [Rome] of brick, but left it in marble', and while this is not entirely accurate, Rome was transfigured under the emperors into the magnificent architectural and cultural centre that we recognize today.¹⁴ One of Augustus' many achievements was the appropriately named Forum of Augustus. It was adorned with statues of illustrious Romans, and one of the monuments was dedicated to Marius. Apparently, even after the passing decades, Marius' legend still loomed large over Rome. An inscription was affixed to Marius' grand statue, which celebrated his distinguished career. This may have also signified that Rome had finally forgiven Marius' copious transgressions.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the eternal city had indeed changed. Massive and often gaudy building projects dotted the redeveloped Roman landscape and left a lasting impression of Rome's greatness and its leaders' inflated egos. Enormous and ornate bathhouses and arenas were constructed for the people. Majestic temples were erected and dedicated to the gods, and colossal palaces fit for the gods were built for the emperors. Of course, many of these grand buildings were bankrolled by the state.¹⁶

The city of Rome, too, continued to grow in size as seemingly boundless wealth flowed in from the provinces, but Rome's golden age could not endure in perpetuity. One of Augustus' greatest blunders was that he never instituted a viable and accepted process for succession to the imperial throne. This created dangerous situations following emperors' deaths, whereby multiple claimants to the throne existed. These episodes often resulted in internecine civil wars that pulled Rome apart. At first, successions were fairly smooth. The tight-fisted Tiberius (reigned AD 14–37) replaced Augustus when he died of old age, and the deranged Caligula succeeded Tiberius once he presumably perished of natural causes. However, Caligula's tenure (AD 37–41) was incredibly problematic, possibly because he may have suffered from a mental illness. As a consequence of his despotic reign, he was the first emperor to be assassinated, which presented Rome with a chance to abrogate the Principate and return to a republican form of government, but most Romans preferred the perceived

benefits of autocratic rule over the possible risks of self-governance. As a result, the Roman autocracy endured, and Caligula's Praetorian Guard handpicked his successor, Claudius (AD 41–54), without any legal sanction, which set a dangerous precedent.¹⁷ Claudius' reign was cut short when he was poisoned, and he was replaced by Nero, who seemed more interested in the arts than civic administration.¹⁸ Nero (AD 54–68) was a poor leader, who ultimately committed suicide to avoid being murdered himself. After his death, the tedious nature of the succession process and the limitations of Augustus' Principate became abundantly clear. Following Nero's suicide in AD 68, there were four different emperors within a twelve-month period. Slowly, emperors' assassinations and civil wars to claim the imperial throne became the norm. By AD 193, Augustus' oversight was illustrated yet again. The year was punctuated by five different emperors, one of whom was Didius Julianus. He shamefully ascended to the imperial throne when the emperorship was auctioned to the highest bidder. Julianus apparently won the bid, but he was executed weeks later. Increasingly, emperors' life expectancies dwindled, but somehow the Empire stayed afloat.¹⁹

On occasions, Rome was rewarded with an able commander and leader, but often the *princeps* was wholly unfit to rule.²⁰ The poor administration and high turnover rate took a toll on the Roman state, but the Empire was suffering from other ailments as well. Less wealth was flowing into the capital because its silver mines were spent. Wars brought in less booty. Rome ceased much of its expansionist policy, and there was little left to plunder in the provinces. While imperial revenue slumped, the costs of maintaining the sprawling Empire grew substantially. Emperors attempted to rectify the problem by raising taxes and debasing their coins, which were then increasingly minted, but the result was long-lasting runaway inflation and economic depression.²¹

Poor domestic policies weren't Rome's only hindrance. Barbarian tribes were increasingly unifying and challenging Rome's dominance. Some emperors attempted to placate the barbarians by handsomely paying them tributes for their good behaviour, while other emperors augmented the imperial armies to meet the new challenges. At its peak, Rome amazingly employed between 300,000 and 600,000 legionaries to defend Rome, but increasing arms also had unintended consequences. The army was incredibly expensive, and the soldiers knew that their role was vital. Consequently, they required frequent

donatives and costly retirement packages, including land grants like Marius had once bestowed, to assure their loyalty. Even with these expensive gifts, the legions' allegiances were often suspect at best. To deal with the high costs of maintaining an army and the mounting pressure from barbarian tribes, Rome increasingly farmed out the Empire's defence. They offered free land to barbarians so long as they dutifully served in Rome's legions, and the plan worked well for a considerable period of time.²²

As the years progressed, the Romans' rights were incrementally eroded while the emperors' power surged. By Emperor Diocletian's reign (AD 284–305), the Principate was essentially abolished and replaced with the Dominate, which finally turned Rome into a purely authoritarian state. The emperors attempted to control everything, and the Romans were entirely subservient to the head of state. In AD 301, Diocletian issued his famous edict on maximum prices, which regulated every aspect of the economy. The emperor set prices and wages, and failure to comply was punishable by death. The experiment was an abysmal failure, and it was eventually ignored to a large extent. However, not all of Diocletian's edicts were deemed poorly devised and ineffective. He wisely realized that Rome was much too large to be governed by a single emperor. Therefore, he experimented with dividing the burden of governance among two and then four leaders; the latter was dubbed the tetrarchy. While the tetrarchy wasn't a lasting reform, the concept of dividing power became essentially permanent, barring some exceptions. Rome was eventually split into eastern and western empires, and a single emperor managed each corner, which proved to be a better approach to governing.²³

Regardless of the attempts to extend the Empire's life, Rome struggled to survive because it suffered from chronic and degenerative disorders, leaving it increasingly dysfunctional. As Rome languished from this terminal combination, it ultimately proved to be fatal. Poor leadership left Rome mismanaged, and the high turnover rate of emperors caused chaos and uncertainty.²⁴ The monetary policy was also disastrous. Their coins were debased incrementally until the silver content was degraded from nearly 100 per cent to less than one per cent silver. This left Rome suffering from out of control inflation practically on a regular basis.²⁵ Meanwhile, the cost of operating and defending the Empire rose substantially while revenue steeply declined. The frequent civil wars limited the Empire's manpower

while leaving Rome's borders neglected and open to barbarian invasions. However, the barbarian populations ultimately surged and the tribes unified, presenting Rome with enormous consolidated enemies. The combination of these factors eventually spelled doom for Rome, and in AD 476, the exhausted Western Roman Empire finally fell to invading barbarians.²⁶

LEGACY

‘Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority.’

– Lord Acton

Gaius Marius’ legacy is complicated to say the very least. Even unearthing his true history is incredibly challenging, given that many of the ancient sources are seriously lacking in quality and are overtly biased against him. In fact, Marius’ eventual enemies recorded much of his story from a jaundiced perspective, and these primary sources influenced many of the great ancient writers who chronicled Marius’ life. Nevertheless, regardless of the attempts to assassinate his character, it is beyond doubt more than 2,000 years later that Marius was unmatched politically and militarily by any of his contemporaries. Historically, he’s been remembered as a brilliant general, revolutionary military reformer and a rather poor statesman, but these perceptions aren’t entirely accurate. The truth about him is much more nuanced. Marius was, without question, an especially talented general, but according to the ancient authors, he wasn’t necessarily an ingenious tactician who relied on intricate battle plans. He owed his enviable track record to his unyielding adherence to warfare’s basic precepts and his stubborn refusal to deviate from them. His compliance with these best practices combined with Rome’s proven method of warfare was a foolproof formula for unlimited victories.

First and foremost, Marius clearly understood that wars were not just won on the battlefield. Lengthy, tedious preparations were necessary for an army to be consistently triumphant. Marius firmly grasped this concept, and his documented military results proved how successful the legions could be if they were painstakingly built upon a solid foundation and led by a competent commander. One of the fundamental elements in Marius’ blueprint for military prosperity was properly conditioning his soldiers. Before confronting the enemy, Marius trained his troops *ad nauseam* until they were physically fit and prepared for the chaos of battle. By the time Marius finished exhaustively drilling his soldiers, there was no doubt that they were highly disciplined, fully understood their roles and had memorized

battle formations and manoeuvres. While the notion of thorough training doesn't appear to be novel to modern eyes, these sensible preparations weren't always implemented in antiquity. Too often, Rome and other ancient armies rushed headlong into battle before they had been adequately trained, and the consequences were frequently horrific. Marius understandably wished to avoid this grim fate, and as a consequence, he extensively drilled his troops. His preparations were laborious, unforgiving and often lasted for extended periods of time. His soldiers undoubtedly loathed the seemingly superfluous drudgery, but their repeated victories proved that Marius' required labours were worthwhile.

Even when his legionaries were properly trained, Marius was not one to impetuously dash to confront Rome's foes. Like any consummate commander, Marius unyieldingly refused to give battle until he was ready and assured, at least in his mind, of victory. To the general, it was never wise to ever engage the enemy unless it was absolutely necessary and/or the circumstances were exceedingly favourable to his legions. He prudently preferred to patiently wait until the enemy was forced to accept battle on his own advantageous terms. To prevent being forced into risky engagements, Marius' meticulous preparations often stymied his enemy and saved his legionaries from possible disaster. As Marius' troops travelled, the general required his soldiers to regularly construct defensive ramparts, which protected them and thwarted their foes. He also managed to more than adequately supply his army with ample provisions so that want of supplies never forced him to engage in an ill-advised battle. However, his legionaries clearly couldn't hide behind their fortifications forever. They were often required to advance through potentially hostile regions. To defend his troops from ambushes while they were on the march, he at times wisely required them to advance in a square formation to safeguard their flanks and baggage train.

Preparing his legions and protecting them from unnecessary battles were only a couple of the indispensable ingredients in Marius' recipe for success. Inevitably, his legionaries were required to confront the enemy, and when they did, Marius often cleverly used nature to his benefit. The seven-time consul was a master at choosing landscapes that favoured his mode of war while effectively negating the enemy's strengths. Throughout Marius' military career, he was found fighting from the high ground and hand-picking battle sites, which voided the enemy's numerical advantage. He even cleverly used the natural

elements, including the sun and the morning mist, to his advantage and his foes' detriment.

Once a battle was imminent, Marius regularly demonstrated that even though he may not have been a tactical genius, he was certainly no dolt. His history proves that he wisely preferred to launch a fierce attack before the enemy was prepared. This obviously put his foes at a distinct disadvantage, which Marius gladly exploited. However, this was not always possible. Other times, he was forced to depend on his reliable instincts, his soldiers' discipline and a sound battle plan. For instance, at least once, he adroitly employed the pincer manoeuvre to envelope his enemy, which ultimately led to their doom.

Marius' military success spanned many years. He was victorious over the Numidian King Jugurtha, who had shrewdly frustrated a handful of Roman generals before him. Not long after, Marius defeated Rome's greatest foreign threat since Hannibal, the Cimbric alliance. He also ably commanded legions in the Social War against the Italians, and when his ageing mind was obsessed with revenge, he once again exhibited his competence as a general as he and Cinna reclaimed Rome for themselves. Marius never lost the requisite military instincts that all great generals possess, and he proved that complex battle plans weren't necessary to be especially prosperous in war. He demonstrated time and again that all that was needed was a solid foundation and a strict adherence to war's cardinal axioms.

Along with being a successful general, Marius has also been credited with being a military innovator who single-handedly revolutionized the Roman army. While there is a significant element of truth to that claim, historically, Marius has received more acclaim than is really deserved. One of the reforms assigned to him pertained to Rome's long-standing policy to exclude the poorest Roman citizens from serving in the legions. The wealth requirement for service was probably adjusted many times over the Republic's history, but a variation of the rule remained in place into Marius' era. Despite this counterproductive policy, when Marius levied troops for his Jugurthine campaign, he opened up the legions to impoverished Romans who had not previously qualified for the military. His ranks quickly swelled, and the troop surge permitted him to essentially occupy Numidia and tighten the noose around Jugurtha until the war concluded. Marius' decision to enrol poorer Romans into the legions' ranks was taboo, but it wasn't technically unprecedented. During times of great disaster, Rome had previously permitted the lowest

strata of Roman citizens to serve in the legions. This occurred during the Pyrrhic War (280–275 BC) and the Second Punic War (218–201 BC), which were both intense struggles for the Republic's survival. While Marius didn't invent the notion of recruiting the destitute into the army, he certainly enrolled them with great success, and it gradually became standard operating procedure for generals to raise armies from all of Rome's classes.¹

Marius is additionally imputed with modifying the legionary pilum. Before the battle at Vercellae, the general instructed his legionaries to replace one of the two steel rivets that joined the pilum's head to its base with a more fragile wooden pin. The reason for this alteration was to weaken the spear's integrity to ensure that the javelin would either warp or break after one use. This meant that spears that had missed their targets could not be reused against the legionaries and the javelins that wedged into enemy shields became disfigured, rendering the shields useless. It was a clever reform, which was probably effective to some degree, but unfortunately, the ancient writers didn't comment on the modification's efficacy. Nonetheless, while Marius was responsible for the alteration and this form of pilum was used after his death, the original version of the Roman spear continued to be used as well. Marius' pilum was simply never universally accepted.

Marius is understandably linked to the reform that bears his name, *muli Mariani*. Marius wanted his army to be lean, nimble and as self-sufficient as possible to allow his legions to outstrip and outperform their enemy. In response, he required his troops to carry heavier loads rather than solely relying on sluggish and burdensome pack animals. While he didn't eliminate legionary baggage trains and beasts of burden entirely, he limited their numbers and achieved his goal of creating a swift and agile army. Over time, this successful, common-sense reform was widely embraced and became a permanent legionary requirement.

Marius is also credited with reorganizing the legion's basic tactical units, but there's really no concrete evidence to suggest that he was responsible for the reform. The largest unit in the Roman army was the legion, and each legion was divided into thirty smaller tactical units called maniples. Each maniple had commanding officers, and when the legion was in battle formation, there were gaps between each maniple. Marius is imputed with replacing the maniples with a new tactical unit called the cohort. The basic difference was that

cohorts were larger, with ten per legion. With the consolidation of the maniples, communications must have improved, considering that commanders only needed to relay orders to ten tactical unit officers rather than thirty per legion. The replacement of the maniple with the cohort was quite successful because it offered the enemy fewer gaps to exploit and provided commanders with more flexibility. However, it isn't clear that Marius was responsible for this reform. It is believed that Marius lived in the era when maniples may have been replaced by cohorts, and since he was already identified as a military innovator, it was widely assumed that he was the general who initiated the change. It is certainly possible that Marius was responsible for this reform. Yet, there is little supporting evidence to suggest that he was.

One less than strategic change correctly attributed to Marius was regarding legionary standards, which were essentially poles carried by soldiers that were topped with an image of one of five different animals. Eagles were one of the beasts featured on the standards, but for some reason Marius decided to phase out the other animals, leaving only the eagle on Rome's standards. The impetus for this is entirely unknown, but the reform became permanent as legions carried these uniform standards well into the Imperial period. While this was a lasting alteration, it was more of a cosmetic change rather than a tactical reform, which didn't affect the military's effectiveness.²

Because of the reforms associated with Marius, he has been identified as a military innovator and reformer who changed the Roman legions forever, but that is a somewhat misleading assertion. Marius wisely recycled previously used tactics, implemented a few unique changes and discarded poor practices. However, Rome didn't require generals to adopt their predecessor's alterations. Marius' changes weren't statutory, and they only affected his soldiers. In the Republic, commanders often followed Rome's long-held legionary traditions, but generals were given a great amount of leeway to make alterations as they wished. Therefore, Marius' reforms could be co-opted or discarded at will by succeeding military men. They were under no obligation to implement their predecessor's reforms. In all likelihood, the changes that Marius implemented were only meant to affect his own soldiers. He probably had no intention of revolutionizing Rome's legions as a whole, and the concept of doing so was likely foreign to him, since generals didn't wield that kind of power. Regardless, not all of the Marian reforms were uniformly

accepted. Others simply weren't his creations, and some just appear to be a natural progression for Rome's legions. Nonetheless, some of Marius' reforms were eventually adopted by other commanders, became more or less permanent and certainly improved Rome's legions.³

Marius has also been unfairly criticized for being the reason that Rome's legions became increasingly loyal to their generals rather than the state. It has been asserted that by a combination of recruiting poor landless Romans, offering legionaries free land grants and sharing the spoils of war, the soldiery began to favour commanders instead of the Roman state. Because Marius employed these policies, he has been wrongly blamed for creating an environment that fostered unfaithfulness in the legions. The evidence, however, does not necessarily support this claim.⁴

While it is true that soldiers became more loyal to generals over time, it is unreasonable to blame Marius for this unfortunate development. He did enroll the poor into his army, and while he wasn't the first to do so, it was a natural evolutionary step. Nevertheless, claiming that admitting the destitute into the legions was partially responsible for an army's disloyalty discounts the lower classes' patriotism. There is nothing to suggest that the poor loved Rome any less than the rich. So, poverty alone couldn't have been a determining factor in the soldiers' allegiances.

Marius' controversial agrarian legislation has also been blamed for Rome's military woes. Marius did continue a policy of generously rewarding his legionaries with farmland on which to settle, and that act alone obviously made them grateful to their benefactor. However, considering that large land grants had been approved by the state rather than the commander in Marius' era, it seems as though soldiers would remain faithful to Rome instead of their generals. Regardless, many of the troops that Marius settled seemed to have mostly lived their lives as dutiful Roman citizens, which undermines the theory that his resettlement programme fostered treachery. Furthermore, he was not the progenitor of veteran resettlement programmes. Scipio Africanus awarded his veterans with land long before Marius did, and as such, Marius shouldn't bear full responsibility for any perceived negative effects related to these measures.

Similarly, sharing the spoils of war wasn't the cause of Rome's later problems. Generals had shared plunder with their soldiers for generations. Marius clearly wasn't the first to use the mostly standard

procedure, and from the Roman point of view, the practice bore few negative repercussions. Considering that it was Sulla's army that first marched on Rome, not Marius', the seven-time consul receives far too much criticism. While large land grants and sharing the wars' plunder may have eventually influenced soldiers' loyalties, Marius could not have foreseen this eventuality, nor is he to blame. However, future legionaries were often increasingly unfaithful to the state. The real reason that they began swearing allegiance to their commanders and engaging in civil wars had more to do with misplaced priorities and a corruption of character than with Marius' policies.

Many writers have also labelled Marius a poor politician, but this isn't entirely true either. Marius had stunning electoral success and was able to enact numerous contentious bills during his time as a statesman. Marius' election and tenure as a tribune of the people revealed a great deal about the up-and-coming politician. He achieved what none of his other family members had ever accomplished. He had been elected to a post in Rome, which was a noteworthy achievement. He lived in a period when it was incredibly difficult for newcomers to enter the unforgiving political realm. He did it nonetheless, and during his term as tribune, he proved that he was a conscientious statesman and a political maverick. He bravely took on Rome's powerful aristocracy, that often favoured the *optimates*, and he enacted a measure that limited bribery. The elites strenuously opposed this proposal because they believed that it would somehow lessen their influence, but Marius boldly stood firm and passed the common-sense bill. However, he ultimately proved that he wasn't necessarily a *populares* partisan at the time either. He successfully opposed expanding the grain dole, which would have placed a much larger financial burden on Rome's faithful taxpayers. Yet, blocking such popular legislation took great fortitude, considering that an enormous voting bloc, including large swathes of the proletariat, must have strongly supported the measure. In the process, he demonstrated his willingness to challenge powerful constituencies and courageously stand on principle.

By 115 BC, Marius was installed as a praetor, and even though his tenure was allegedly uneventful, after his term, he was assigned to govern a Spanish province. He apparently did so with honour, and he admirably cleared the region of marauding bandits. Following his governorship, his political career went silent for a few years, but he returned and was elected to the consulship of 107 BC, which was an

immense honour for the *novus homo*. Raising an army and prosecuting a war, rather than promoting an ambitious domestic policy, consumed most of his consulship. Afterwards, Marius obtained the monumental, albeit dubious, distinction of being elected to the consulship five consecutive times starting in 104 BC, despite such actions being wildly illegal. During his spate of consulships, Marius was able to pass controversial legislation, granting his veterans land on two occasions, which was significant given that these measures were strongly opposed. Even after his six consulships and without an elected post, he proved that he was still a force to be reckoned with as he orchestrated the transferral of the Mithridatic command to himself. Marius was an adept, albeit imperfect, statesman, but his numerous faults as a politician lie with the methods that he was willing to employ to be elected, pass legislation and remain in power. However, there is no denying that Marius was incredibly successful in electoral politics, with only two well-documented defeats, and he was highly effective at enacting legislation.

Gaius Marius was much more than just a successful politician and general. He left a lasting impression on Rome and altered its history. Interestingly, Marius and the Republic shared a similar trajectory, and they mirrored each other in a multitude of other ways too. They both emerged from rather unspectacular and obscure beginnings. According to the Greeks, Rome was essentially a rural backwater populated by uncivilized oafs. The eternal city didn't occupy a great harbour town like many storied Mediterranean civilizations, nor were Romans exceptional sailors. They were simply an unremarkable farming village on the Tiber River. Given their humble beginnings, no one could have reasonably expected that this relatively insignificant community, which was once ruled by Etruscan kings, would one day control much of the known world. Nevertheless, Rome defiantly expelled its Etruscan overlords, reformed into a republic and became a renowned military juggernaut.

Similarly, Marius was never seriously expected to become Rome's leading man, much less a legendary statesman and general. He was born into a non-patrician family whose members had never been elected to a Roman political office, and he grew up in a quiet Italian farming community beyond Rome's outskirts. He allegedly enjoyed the austere provincial lifestyle that rewarded hard work and moral living. After he reached the requisite military age, he dutifully joined the legions, like many other unknown Romans. However, he was

quickly noticed by one of Rome's most celebrated men, Scipio Aemilianus, who was struck by Marius' exemplary work ethic and leadership. Through his military service, perseverance and the help of wealthy benefactors, Marius was able to enter the political world and reach levels of fame, fortune and power that only the gods could have predicted.

However, there were grave faults lingering beneath Rome's and Marius' outward appearances. Rome became the Mediterranean's epicentre of power, but the capital itself fell short of the grandeur commonly associated with greatness. The city reeked, and its streets were filthy, which explains Cicero's derisive nickname for Rome, 'Romulus' cesspool'. Homes were prone to sudden collapse, and buildings randomly peppered the streets without any rhyme or reason. At this point, Rome wasn't filled with enormous iconic marble buildings, and the city's explosive growth was clearly unplanned.

The Roman state and its politicians were also imperfect. The Republic was a well-intentioned attempt to create a government that mixed the best attributes from democracies, oligarchies and monarchies, and it succeeded in numerous ways. It also failed spectacularly. As the years progressed, many aristocrats became entirely unscrupulous and used the state as their personal conduit to wealth, influence and continued cronyism. Consequently, the underclasses were frequently ignored and, even worse, abused, which sparked the creation of the tribunate to protect them. It was created to admirably rectify inequity, but the office was perverted, sometimes with Marius' help, which gave rise to radical populist demagogues. They repeatedly subverted the constitution for selfish purposes, and they began offering free food and farmland to the masses and even promises of debt cancellation. At first, it seems that this was done out of a sense of altruism, but over time, social welfare programmes were increasingly used as an expedient political tool and path to acquire the commoners' loyalties. The government was no longer a minimalist approach to protect its citizens' most basic rights while honouring their long held-virtues. It became a mechanism for obtaining personal glory, wealth and welfare, always at the expense of the taxpayers, a conquered people or off the hardworking legionaries' backs. The commoners, the aristocracy and the state itself slowly became thoroughly corrupted. The proletariat increasingly demanded larger and larger handouts. The aristocracy continued its attempts to exploit the underprivileged and even neighbouring tribes, and both

constituencies misused the Roman state to achieve their misguided domestic and foreign goals. The rapacious Romans even used the government to seek out unfortunate countries to strip of their wealth and enrich the Roman citizenry.

As Rome's influence gradually grew, so did the Romans' insatiable appetite for more wealth and power. The burgeoning city had once proclaimed that it only engaged in war if all diplomatic channels had failed and conflict was inescapable. Eventually, Rome became all too willing to declare war under dubious circumstances to enrich leading Romans, further individual careers and pad Rome's treasury. However, the violence wasn't only occurring abroad. For the most part, the Roman form of government had operated peacefully for hundreds of years, but as the politicians' and voters' characters degenerated, they ultimately adopted violence as an acceptable political tool, which led to riots, assassinations, gang activity and civil wars.

The Republic's constitution was also increasingly circumvented, bent and ignored until it appeared to be more of a suggestion rather than the rule of law. The Republic's forefathers had prudently instituted constitutional forms and limits on power for good reason, but the people seemed eager to disregard the founders' foresight out of myopic convenience. In Rome, it was discovered that when a politician bent the nation's rule of law out of expediency, other statesmen increasingly followed the poor example. The law was then incrementally perverted, and each action was often more perverse than its predecessor. The cycle continued, and the results were devastating as Rome struggled to exist as a functional republic.

Marius' life reflected Rome's impressive trajectory and unlimited potential in many ways. He spent his early life nurturing his burgeoning political and military career, and while he was flawed, he lived the predominantly upstanding life of a Roman citizen, which was marked by hard work and temperance. During the Numantine War, he was a model legionary, and he assiduously climbed the *cursus honorum* through mostly honourable means, although he was accused of electoral bribery during his praetorian campaign. Nevertheless, his service in each of his political posts was largely commendable, but as his elected public career paused, Metellus assigned him as one of his legates, whereby Marius demonstrated his talents as a commander. However, as Marius' ambitions grew, his foreboding flaws became more conspicuous.

During the Jugurthine War, he resolved to campaign for the consulship, and he won handily. He reached the pinnacle of power, but through means that were questionable or even downright illegal, and he repeatedly reassumed the post and remained there for far too long. He was quick to conveniently stoke discontent among Rome's classes to benefit his career. He admonished and derided the aristocracy to win the lower classes' support, and while the nobles were often unjust, fomenting animosity among the orders was not done with altruistic intentions. Furthermore, he repeatedly ignored the constitution to remain in power far longer than was permitted, for no other reason than to retain his influence and amass more wealth and glory.

As a general, the wars he initially prosecuted were just, and they were in response to an egregious offence or in self-defence against an existential threat. He successfully navigated these ominous wars without unnecessarily risking his legionaries' lives. His actions during the conflicts were mostly justified, save for a few reprehensible episodes. Like most ancients, he annihilated whole armies, sold survivors into slavery and even eradicated an entire city's adult population. While this was commonplace in the ancient world, it is safe to say that murdering and enslaving the innocent, like he did with Capsa's inhabitants, was not only unnecessary but indubitably wrong in the moral sense. The decaying nature of Marius' character was revealed in other ways too. The man who once executed just wars attempted to provoke Mithridates into attacking Rome simply to provide himself a path back to power. After struggling to acquire the Mithridatic command, he ultimately turned his troops on Rome. He led soldiers alongside Cinna, and they marched on his homeland as if they were an invading foreign army. Regrettably, the impetus for Marius' involvement seems to have been nothing more than to obtain revenge and return to prominence.

As a magistrate, Marius ruled equitably for most of his illustrious career, but by the end of his long life, he had no use for due process as he condemned many to death for no other reason than they offended him or supported his nemesis, Sulla. Marius became judge, jury and, if his friends would have permitted it, executioner. His pogrom rocked Rome and caused widespread terror in the people whom he once defended, and the former great and just Marius conducted the unnecessary purge with guiltless zeal.

The seeds of the Republic's and Marius' spectacular falls were sown

early. The characters of both were, in part, corrupted by unbridled ambitions bereft of lasting integrity. As Rome's domain expanded and it grew rich, the state became a mechanism to enrich the wealthy and powerful even further, and it became a mode to mollify the proletariat with promises of handouts. Politicians also exploited the government. They often sought office to protect and advance their own self-interests, not out of public service, and the Republic's statesmen frequently pitted large voting groups, who were already at odds, against one another. The result was detrimental to Rome. When the last vestiges of the Republic finally slipped away, most Romans really didn't care. The commoners were pleased so long as their stomachs were full, civil strife was abated and they were safe from foreign invasions. There were some idealistic republican holdouts fighting for a return to their constitutional foundations. However, as long as the aristocracy was enriched and the proletariat assuaged, most were willing to turn a blind eye, sign away their rights and accept the autocracy.

Like Rome, Marius had a voracious appetite for unfettered power and glory, and the drive to sate his hunger and retain prominence was central to his downfall. Marius was a relatively moral man for most of his life, at least by Roman standards, but he was willing to cut corners, tread into grey areas, partner with men of ill-repute and eventually commit illegal actions, all for lasting authority. However, there were obvious warning signs, which should have alerted Rome to Marius' questionable character. Early in his career, he was charged with electoral bribery, and while he was acquitted by a tied jury vote, red flags should have been raised. Courts in ancient Rome were increasingly corrupted by bribes. Of course, it is impossible to say whether bribery played a role in Marius' judicial proceedings, but simply being charged should have warranted a re-examination to determine whether Marius was a man who deserved to climb the *cursus honorum*. Considering that electoral bribery was rampant, Marius' eventual use of inducements and the nature of Roman politics, it seems quite possible that he was, in fact, guilty of bribing the electorate.

Still, there were other clues that Marius' character was tragically deficient. When Marius was in Numidia, he wished to be relieved from his post to canvass for the consulship, but Metellus initially denied his request. In the meantime, he pressured Metellus to condemn one of the nobleman's friends, and once he succeeded in persuading his

commander to execute the man, evidence surfaced that may have exonerated him. Marius used this against Metellus in a despicable manner, which was a clear sign of Marius' defective character. He was willing to influence an ally to execute a man, only to publicly ridicule him later to shamelessly promote his own candidacy.

Marius owed his career largely to the Caecilius Metellus family, but he returned the favour by organizing an anti-Metellus letter-writing campaign and spreading lies throughout Rome about his benefactor. When Metellus could no longer tolerate Marius' constant insubordination, he allowed him to travel to Rome to campaign for the consulship, where he exploited the ongoing and occasionally violent class disputes for his personal gain. When Marius was elected, he insulted his former friend again and had Metellus stripped of the Numidian command. Marius' willingness to lie and betray Metellus for no other reason than political gain should have caused widespread concern among the Romans, but instead, for some reason, they rewarded him with the state's highest post and the Numidian command.

Once Marius was in charge of the Jugurthine War effort, he prosecuted an impressive victory, but three episodes during the conflict should have served as a warning to his fellow Romans and forced them to consider whether he should be entrusted with unprecedented and extended power. He was quick to order the deaths of all the adult inhabitants of Capsa, regardless of whether they were combatants or not. This murderous rage was unfortunately portentous of his future actions. It should have offended the Roman electorate, but it didn't. Nevertheless, when the war concluded, Sulla boasted that he was the one who actually ended the protracted conflict, which incensed Marius. Jealousy is a natural emotion, but in Marius' case it became an incurable festering wound. He was prone to long-standing grudges and resentment, which are not virtues commonly found in truly great leaders. The first public instance of his petty jealousy should have been a warning to all Romans, but it was not heeded. Finally, once Jugurtha was captured, Marius clearly made everyone aware that he desired a second consulship in an unconstitutional period of time, and he readily accepted the post. When Rome learned that he was willing to trash the constitution and illegally hold a second consulship within a tenyear window, Rome should have learned everything that was needed to know to determine whether he had the character of a remarkable leader. The Romans ignored all of

the warning signs, to their detriment, and they awarded him unparalleled influence.

As Marius tasted great power, his character flaws were magnified and exaggerated, which is a lesson even for modern times. Once in office, his desire for wealth, control and triumphs caused him to illegally hold an unprecedented five consecutive consulships and a total of six within a ten-year period. He was also compelled to bribe the electorate in order to obtain his sixth consulship, and he repeatedly formed partnerships with unscrupulous politicians to achieve his desired ends. Marius' character changed in other ways too. He abandoned his purported austere lifestyle for one of lavish luxuries, and, at times, he seemed to flaunt his tremendous wealth and honours.

Eventually, he felt that the only way to return to Rome's good graces was to induce a war with the belligerent King Mithridates. He was willing to risk Rome's well-being and its citizens' lives to spark a major conflict, simply to return to prominence. Those who have an unquenchable desire for glory and power over others, like Marius, should be viewed as suspect, but inevitably, when these individuals do rise to power, the risk greatly increases that their underlying character flaws will be exacerbated. The pursuit and obtainment of great authority and influence has a way of magnifying and even exaggerating pre-existing character defects, which lurk beneath the promising surfaces of young politicians and often go unnoticed until it is far too late. The sad truth is that humans rarely become more virtuous once they acquire power.

When considering the fatal character flaws beneath Rome's and Marius' veneers, it is no wonder that they both fell, but Marius was actually an essential link in the Republic's ultimate collapse. He may initially have heroically rescued Rome from destruction by defeating the mighty Cimbri and their allies, but he only saved it temporarily because he later hastened its demise. When Rome became a superpower after defeating Carthage, it tinkered with nation-building and meddled in foreign affairs, but the experiment ended in the same spectacular failure that plagues the modern world. To reward some of its allies from the Second Punic War, Rome helped create a nation, which became the enlarged Numidian state. The kingdom was supposed to serve as a dependable and malleable Roman ally. At first, the experiment seemed successful, but after Jugurtha impressed Scipio Aemilianus in Numantia, Romans began clamouring for Jugurtha to be

officially recognized as King Micipsa's successor. As a result, he was declared one of three princes in line to the Numidian throne. However, he quickly killed his co-heirs, disobeyed Rome repeatedly and murdered a multitude of Italians, which sparked the Jugurthine War. Rome was directly responsible for Numidia's creation and Jugurtha's rise, and likewise, Rome was responsible once its client-state and its popular king turned against the Republic. The one-time ally bribed and outwitted Roman generals until Metellus was dispatched to deal with him, and when his strategy was deemed too lethargic, Rome witnessed Marius's ascent. He recruited a new army and travelled to Numidia, but among his officers was Sulla.

Marius and Sulla owed their rise, in large part, to Rome's Numidian experiment in nation-building, but the two men didn't realize that they would be instrumental in the Republic's fall. Both of them became increasingly popular, but their pettiness drove them apart until even Rome wasn't large enough to contain their competing egos. This eventually caused civil strife as Sulla twice marched on Rome and Marius once. Between Marius and Sulla, the constitution was obliterated and reformed, and countless Romans died as a result of their narrow-minded rivalry. While Marius' ascendancy gave rise to Sulla, it was two of Sulla's lieutenants who played an integral role in the Republic's final destruction. Pompey and Crassus served under Sulla, who permitted their meteoric ascent, but once the dictator died, the two became Rome's leading men. To tightly control the state's operations, they formed an alliance with Marius' nephew, Julius Caesar, and formed the First Triumvirate. When the triumvirate broke down, Rome was in the midst of a debilitating civil war between two of the triumvirs, Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great. Caesar was the victor, and ultimately proclaimed himself dictator in perpetuity in complete disregard of Rome's constitution. When he was assassinated, there was a glimmer of hope that a republican government might once again reign supreme, but those hopes were dashed by Caesar's adopted son, Augustus, who formed the Principate. He essentially dissolved the Republic through a combination of sheer power, murders and sleight of hand. The Republic was never to return, and the autocratic government grew increasingly heavy-handed.

Jugurtha's goal was never to destroy the Roman Republic, but he unwittingly sparked a chain reaction that caused its demise, and Marius and Sulla were key links in the process. The Republic was already terminally ill, but Marius' and Sulla's contributions hastened

its fall. Both men were among the most accomplished Romans to ever live, but they were corrupted by their own character flaws, which led to some of the darkest chapters in the Roman Republic's history. During this period, the worst of Rome's woes essentially boiled down to a petty dispute over the Mithridatic command, followed by actions of increasing villainy. However, Marius' eventual fall wasn't predestined. He was in complete control of his legacy. He achieved great things, but he was unfortunately undone only by himself. The real misfortune was that Marius lived long enough to destroy his own reputation. Had Sulla murdered him before his final return to Rome, then he would without a doubt be remembered as one of the greatest Romans ever, even with his numerous character flaws. However, he was not killed, and his defects were exaggerated by seething revenge and unchecked ambition. In the end, Gaius Marius was defeated by none save himself, and therein lies the tragedy of the saviour of Rome.

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Chapter I: Arpinum

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15. Sall. *Iug.* 37.1–3.

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17. Sall. *Iug.* 37–39.

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Chapter V: Metellus

Quote: Sall. *Iug.* 64.2. (trans. J.C. Rolfe)

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18. Dio. 26.89.3. (trans. Earnest Cary)

19. Sall. *Iug.* 64.3–5.

20. Plut. *Mar.* 7.2–3.

21. Diod. 35.38.1.

22. Sall. *Iug.* 64.5–6, 65.1–5.

23. Sall. *Iug.* 66.1–4.

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Chapter VI: Novus Homo

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Chapter VII: Consul

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16. Sall. *Iug.* 97.3–4; Oros. 5.15; Sall. *Iug.* 97.4; Oros. 5.15.

17. Sall. *Iug.* 97–99.

18. Oros. 5.15.

19. Sall. *Iug.* 100–101.

20. Sall. *Iug.* 101.4–5.

21. Oros. 5.15.

22. Sall. *Iug.* 101.6–7.

23. Sall. *Iug.* 101.8–11.

24. Oros. 5.15.

25. Sall. *Iug.* 101.11. (trans. J.C. Rolfe)
26. Sall. *Iug.* 96.1–3.
27. Sall. *Iug.* 102.1; Canter, H.V., ‘The Chronology of Sallust’s Jugurtha’, *The Classical Journal* 6.7 (1911), pp.290–95; Liv. *Per.* 66.1.
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18. Oros. 5.15; Caes. *BG.* 1.7.

19. Flor. 1.38.4; Liv. *Per.* 67.8.

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22. Liv. *Per.* 67.1–3.
23. Dio. 27.91.2.
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25. Gran. Lic. 11.
26. Dio. 27.91.1.
27. Gran. Lic. 11–12.
28. Eutrop. 5.1.1.
29. Plut. *Mar.* 11.2.
30. Dio. 27.91.2.
31. Gran. Lic. 12.
32. Dio. 27.91.3–4.
33. Liv. *Per.* 67.1.
34. Eutrop. 5.1.1.
35. Diod. 36.1.1; Oros. 5.16.
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38. Gran. Lic. 13.
39. Val. Max. 2.3.2.
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41. App. *Han.* 1–61.

Chapter IX: Triumph

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Chapter X: Muli Mariani

Quote: Plut. *Mar.* 14.6. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin)

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2. Diod. 36.3.1–2.

3. Plut. *Sull.* 3.3–4, 4.1.

4. Frontin. *Str.* 1.2.6.

5. Flor. 1.38.5.

6. Plut. *Mar.* 14.1.

7. Plut. *Mar.* 14.1–2.

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11. Plut. *Sull.* 4.1–3.

12. Plin. *Nat.* 10.5.

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16. Plut. *Mar.* 14.3–5.

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21. *De vir ill.* 73.

22. Liv. 31.49.

23. Plin. *Nat.* 33.4.

24. Plut. *Sull.* 4.1.

25. Plut. *Mar.* 14.7–8.

26. Plut. *Sull.* 4.2.

27. Plut. *Mar.* 15.1; Oros. 5.16.

28. Plut. *Mar.* 15.2–3.

- 29. Plut. *Mar.* 15.4.
- 30. Plut. *Sert.* 3.2–3.
- 31. Plut. *Mar.* 15.4.
- 32. Flor. 1.38.18.
- 33. Oros. 5.16; Plut. *Mar.* 15.5, 16.1.
- 34. Frontin. *Str.* 4.7.5.
- 35. Plut. *Mar.* 16.2–3.
- 36. Plut. *Mar.* 16.3–5. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin)
- 37. Plut. *Mar.* 17.1–6.
- 38. Plut. *Mar.* 18.1; Oros. 5.16.
- 39. Plut. *Mar.* 18.1.
- 40. Plut. *Mar.* 18.1–2. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin)

Chapter XI: Aquae Sextiae

Quote: Flor. 1.38.7. (trans. E.S. Forster)

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5. Oros. 5.16; Plut. *Mar.* 18.4.

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7. Plut. *Mar.* 18.4. (trans. by Bernadotte Perrin)

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9. Plut. *Mar.* 19.3–5; Oros. 5.16.

10. Plut. *Mar.* 19.6.

11. Flor. 1.38.9.

12. Plut. *Mar.* 19.6–7.

13. Sampson, Gareth, *The Crisis of Rome*. South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword, 2010, pp.130–63.

14. Plut. *Mar.* 20.1–3.

15. Frontin. *Str.* 2.9.1.

16. Plut. *Mar.* 20.3.

17. Plut. *Mar.* 20.3.

18. Oros. 5.16; Plut. *Mar.* 20.4.

19. Plut. *Mar.* 20.4–6.

20. Frontin. *Str.* 2.4.6.

21. Plut. *Mar.* 21.1.

22. Oros. 5.16.

23. Plut. *Mar.* 21.1–2; Oros. 5.16; Liv. *Per.* 68.2.

24. Oros. 5.16; Flor. 1.38.10.

25. Oros. 5.16; Flor. 1.38.10; Plut. *Mar.* 24.4.

26. Oros. 5.16.

27. Jero. 123.8.

28. Plut. *Mar.* 22.1–3.

29. Dio. 27.94.1.

Chapter XII: Vercellae

Quote: Flor. 1.38.5. (trans. E.S. Forster)

1. Plut. *Sull.* 4.3.
2. Plut. *Mar.* 23.1–2.
3. Sampson, Gareth, *The Crisis of Rome*. South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword, 2010, pp.164–79; Frontin. *Str.* 1.5.3.
4. Plut. *Mar.* 23.2; Flor. 1.38.12; Liv. *Per.* 68.6.
5. Plut. *Mar.* 23.2.
6. Plut. *Mar.* 23.3–4.
7. Flor. 1.38.12.
8. Plut. *Mar.* 23.4–5.
9. Flor. 1.38.12; Liv. *Per.* 68.6; Plut. *Mar.* 23.5.
10. Liv. *Per.* 68.6.
11. Flor. 1.38.13.
12. Oros. 5.16.
13. Dio. 27.94.2.
14. Plut. *Mar.* 24.1–2.
15. Plut. *Mar.* 22.2.
16. Flor. 1.38.14.
17. Plut. *Mar.* 24.2–4. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin); Flor. 1.38.10.
18. Plut. *Mar.* 25.1.
19. Plut. *Mar.* 25.2–3; Flor. 1.38.14; Plut. *Mar.* 25.3.
20. Plut. *Mar.* 27.3; Oros. 5.16.
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22. Plut. *Mar.* 25.1–2.
23. Sampson, Gareth, *The Crisis of Rome*. South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword, 2010, pp.180–91.
24. Plut. *Mar.* 25.4–7.
25. Plut. *Mar.* 26.1–2. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin); Sampson, Gareth, *The Crisis of Rome*. South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword, 2010, pp.164–79.
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27. Plut. *Mar.* 26.3.
28. Sampson, Gareth, *The Crisis of Rome*. South Yorkshire: Pen and

Sword, 2010, pp.164–79.

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30. Frontin. *Str.* 2.2.8.

31. Flor. 1.38.15.

32. Oros. 5.16.

33. Plut. *Mar.* 25.4.

34. Flor. 1.3.14–15.

35. Oros. 5.16.

36. Plut. *Mar.* 27.1–3.

37. Oros. 5.16; Plut. *Mar.* 27.2.

38. Flor. 1.38.14; Plut. *Mar.* 27.3; Liv. *Per.* 68.6.

39. Oros. 5.16.

40. Flor. 1.38.14.

41. Plut. *Mar.* 27.4–5; Eutrop. 5.2.2.

42. Flor. 1.38.18.

43. Plut. *Mar.* 27.5.

44. Liv. *Per.* 68.2, 68.6.

45. Plut. *Mar.* 27.5.

46. CIL. 6.41024; Plut. *Mar.* 2.2.

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48. Plut. *Mar.* 27.5–6.

49. Plut. *Mar.* 27.6.

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Chapter XIII: Pax

Quote: Plut. *Mar.* 31.2. (trans. John Dryden)

1. Plut. *Mar.* 28.1–3.

2. Plut. *Mar.* 28.2. (trans. John Dryden)

3. Plut. *Mar.* 28.4.

4. Plut. *Mar.* 28.5.

5. Diod. 36.12.1.

6. App. *BC.* 1.28; Oros. 5.17.

7. Plut. *Mar.* 28.5.

8. Vell. 2.12.6.

9. Plut. *Mar.* 28.5–6.

10. Plut. *Mar.* 29.1; App. *BC.* 1.28.

11. App. *BC.* 1.29; Cic. *Balb.* 48; Cic. *Leg.* 2.14.

12. Plut. *Mar.* 29.1; App. *BC.* 1.29; Plut. *Crass.* 2.8. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin)

13. Plut. *Mar.* 29.2–5.

14. App. *BC.* 1.29–30.

15. Plut. *Mar.* 29.2.

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17. App. *BC.* 1.30–31; Plut. *Mar.* 29.4–5.

18. Plut. *Mar.* 29.5–6.

19. Plut. *Mar.* 29.7.

20. App. *BC.* 1.31.

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22. App. *BC.* 1.31; Plut. *Mar.* 29.7; Plut. *Mar.* 29.8. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin)

23. App. *BC.* 1.31.

24. Plut. *Mar.* 29.8.

25. Plut. *Mar.* 30.1.

26. App. *BC.* 1.32.

27. Oros. 5.17.

28. App. *BC.* 1.32; Flor. 2.4.4; Oros. 5.17; Plut. *Mar.* 30.1–3.

29. Plut. *Mar.* 30.3.
30. Oros. 5.17.
31. Plut. *Mar.* 30.3.
32. App. *BC.* 1.32.
33. Plut. *Mar.* 30.3–4; Flor. 2.4.6.
34. App. *BC.* 1.32; Plut. *Mar.* 30.4.
35. Plut. *Mar.* 30.4.
36. Cic. *Balb.* 48; Cic. *Leg.* 2.14.
37. Plut. *Mar.* 30.4.
38. App. *BC.* 1.33.
39. Oros. 5.17.
40. Diod. 36.16.1; Plut. *Mar.* 31.1.
41. Plut. *Mar.* 31.1. (trans. John Dryden)
42. Plut. *Mar.* 31.2.
43. Plut. *Mar.* 31.2. (trans. John Dryden)
44. Vell. 2.15.4.
45. App. *BC.* 1.33.
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47. Cic. *ad Brut.* 1.5
48. Plut. *Mar.* 32.1.

Chapter XIV: Drusus

Quote: Vell. 2.14.2. (trans. Frederick W. Shipley)

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6. Salmon, E.T., 'The Cause of the Social War', *Phoenix* 16.2 (1962), pp.107–19.

7. Salmon, E.T., 'The Cause of the Social War', *Phoenix* 16.2 (1962), pp.107–19.

8. Vell. 2.13.1; App. BC. 1.35; Salmon, E.T., 'The Cause of the Social War', *Phoenix* 16.2 (1962), pp.107–19.

9. App. BC. 1.35, 1.36.

10. Diod. 37.11.1.

11. App. BC. 1.35, 1.36.

12. Oros. 5.18.

13. Salmon, E.T., 'The Cause of the Social War', *Phoenix* 16.2 (1962), pp.107–19.

14. App. BC. 1.36.

15. Diod. 37.10.1–3.

16. Salmon, E.T., 'The Cause of the Social War', *Phoenix* 16.2 (1962), pp.107–19.

17. Flor. 2.18.8.

18. Vell. 2.14.1; Salmon, E.T., 'The Cause of the Social War', *Phoenix* 16.2 (1962), pp.107–19; App. BC. 1.36; Vell. 2.14.2. (trans. Frederick W. Shipley)

19. App. BC. 1.37–38.

20. App. BC. 1.38; Oros. 5.18.

21. App. BC. 1.39.

22. Plut. Mar. 32.3.

Chapter XV: Socii

Quote: Plut. *Sull.* 6.2. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin)

1. App. *BC.* 1.39.

2. App. *BC.* 1.39; Sampson, Gareth, *The Collapse of Rome*. South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2013, pp.21–53.

3. App. *BC.* 1.40–41, 1.47.

4. App. *BC.* 1.43; Oros. 5.18.

5. App. *BC.* 1.43.

6. App. *BC.* 1.43; Oros. 5.18.

7. Plut. *Mar.* 32.3. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin)

8. App. *BC.* 1.43.

9. App. *BC.* 1.43.

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11. App. *BC.* 1.43–44.

12. Liv. *Per.* 73.5.

13. App. *BC.* 1.44.

14. Plut. *Mar.* 33.3. (trans. John Dryden)

15. App. *BC.* 1.46; Oros. 5.18.

16. Diod. 37.15.1–3.

17. App. *BC.* 1.47–48.

18. Oros. 5.18.

19. App. *BC.* 1.42, 1.45.

20. App. *BC.* 1.49; Vell. 2.16.4.

21. App. *BC.* 1.49.

22. Plut. *Mar.* 33.3.

23. App. *BC.* 1.45, 1.48.

24. Plut. *Mar.* 33.1.

25. Sampson, Gareth, *The Collapse of Rome*. South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2013, pp.21–53.

26. App. *BC.* 1.50–52; Oros. 5.18.

27. App. *BC.* 1.50–51.

28. App. *BC.* 1.52–53.

29. Vell. 2.15.3; Vell. 2.16.4.

Chapter XVI: Mithridates

Quote: Plut. *Mar.* 31.3. (trans. John Dryden)

1. App. *Mith.* 9.
2. App. *Mith.* 10.
3. Just. 37.1–7.
4. Plin. *Nat.* 25.5–7.
5. App. *Mith.* 10.
6. App. *Mith.* 10.
7. Plut. *Sull.* 5.3.
8. App. *Mith.* 10–21.
9. Plut. *Mar.* 34.1, 34.5.
10. Plut. *Mar.* 34.2. (trans. John Dryden)
11. Plut. *Mar.* 34.3–4.
12. Plut. *Mar.* 6.3.
13. Plut. *Mar.* 34.3–4.

Chapter XVII: Justitium

Quote: App. *BC.* 1.60. (trans. Horace White)

1. Plut. *Sull.* 6.10.

2. Cic. *Sull.* 91.

3. Plut. *Sull.* 6.1–2, 6.10.

4. Plut. *Sull.* 6.10, 7.1–2; App. *Mith.* 22–23.

5. Val Max. 9.2.3; Plut. *Sull.* 24.4.

6. Plut. *Sull.* 7.2–6.

7. Plut. *Sull.* 8.1–2; Plut. *Mar.* 35.1–2.

8. Liv. *Per.* 77.1; Plut. *Sull.* 8.2.

9. App. *BC.* 1.55–56.

10. Plut. *Sull.* 8.2–3; App. *BC.* 1.55.

11. Plut. *Sull.* 8.3.

12. App. *BC.* 1.56.

13. Plut. *Sull.* 9.1.

14. App. *BC.* 1.56.

15. Plut. *Sull.* 8.3; Plut. *Mar.* 35.2–3.

16. Plut. *Mar.* 35.2.

17. Plut. *Sull.* 8.3; App. *BC.* 1.56–57.

18. Plut. *Sull.* 8.4, 9.2.

19. Plut. *Mar.* 35.4.

20. Plut. *Sull.* 9.1–2.

21. App. *BC.* 1.57; Sampson, Gareth, *The Collapse of Rome*. South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2013, pp.56–75.

22. Plut. *Mar.* 35.4.

23. Plut. *Sull.* 9.1; Carney, T.F., ‘The Flight and Exile of Marius’, *Greece & Rome* 8.2 (1961), pp.98–121.

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26. Plut. *Sull.* 9.2.

27. App. *BC.* 1.57. (trans. Horace White)

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- 31. Plut. *Sull.* 9.5. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin); App. *BC.* 1.57.
- 32. Plut. *Sull.* 9.6–7; App. *BC.* 1.58–59.
- 33. Plut. *Sull.* 9.6.
- 34. App. *BC.* 1.58.
- 35. Landart, Paul, *Finding Ancient Rome: Walks in the City*. Paula Landart, 2015, p.332.
- 36. App. *BC.* 1.58.
- 37. Plut. *Sull.* 9.6–7.
- 38. Plut. *Mar.* 35.5.
- 39. App. *BC.* 1.59.
- 40. Flor. 2.9.8; Plut. *Sull.* 10.1–2.
- 41. Plut. *Sull.* 10.1; Vell. 2.19.1.
- 42. Plut. *Sull.* 10.2–4; App. *BC.* 1.63.

Chapter XVIII: Hostis

Quote: Plut. *Mar.* 39.2. (trans. John Dryden)

1. Plut. *Mar.* 35.5–6.

2. Carney, T.F., ‘The Flight and Exile of Marius’, *Greece & Rome* 8.2 (1961), pp.98–121; Plut. *Mar.* 35.6.

3. Plut. *Mar.* 35–37.

4. Plut. *Mar.* 38.1–2; Cic. *Sest.* 50.

5. Vell. 2.19.2.

6. Plut. *Mar.* 38.2–3, 38.5–6; Scheid, John, *An Introduction to Roman Religion*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003, pp.111–26.

7. Plut. *Mar.* 38.3–5; Carney, T.F., ‘The Flight and Exile of Marius’, *Greece & Rome* 8.2 (1961), pp.98–121.

8. Plut. *Mar.* 39.1; Vell. 2.19.3.

9. Plut. *Mar.* 39.1–2; Plut. *Mar.* 39.2. (trans. John Dryden)

10. Plut. *Mar.* 39.3. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin); Val. Max. 1.5.5.

11. Plut. *Mar.* 39.3–4; Vell. 2.19.4.

12. Plut. *Mar.* 40.1.

13. App. *BC.* 1.62.

14. Plut. *Mar.* 40.1.

15. Cic. *Sest.* 50.

16. Plut. *Mar.* 40.2; Carney, T.F., ‘The Flight and Exile of Marius’, *Greece & Rome* 8.2 (1961), pp.98–121.

17. Plut. *Mar.* 40.2; Marzano, Annalisa, *Harvesting the Sea: The Exploitation of Marine Resources in the Roman Mediterranean*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, p.151.

18. Plut. *Mar.* 40.3. (trans. John Dryden)

19. Vell. 2.19.4.

20. Plut. *Mar.* 40.5–7.

21. Plut. *Mar.* 40.7.

22. App. *BC.* 1.62.

Chapter XIX: Proconsul

Quote: App. *BC.* 1.71. (trans. Horace White)

1. Plut. *Sull.* 10.3–4.
2. App. *BC.* 1.64–65.
3. App. *BC.* 1.64–65.
4. Flor. 2.9.9.
5. App. *BC.* 1.64–65.
6. App. *BC.* 1.65–67; Vell. 2.21.2.
7. Vell. 2.20.3; App. *BC.* 1.65.
8. App. *BC.* 1.65. (trans. Horace White)
9. App. *BC.* 1.66; Vell. 2.20.3–4.
10. App. *BC.* 1.67; Plut. *Mar.* 41.2–4.
11. Plut. *Mar.* 41.3, 42.1.
12. Plut. *Sert.* 5.1.
13. Plut. *Mar.* 41.3, 42.1.
14. App. *BC.* 1.67.
15. App. *BC.* 1.67; Plut. *Mar.* 42.1.
16. App. *BC.* 1.68.
17. Plut. *Mar.* 42.3–5.
18. App. *BC.* 1.68.
19. Vell. 2.21.4.
20. App. *BC.* 1.69–70.
21. Plut. *Mar.* 43.1–3.
22. App. *BC.* 1.70–73.
23. App. *BC.* 1.71.
24. App. *BC.* 1.71; Oros. 5.19.
25. App. *BC.* 1.71.
26. App. *BC.* 1.72.
27. Plut. *Mar.* 44.1–3; App. *BC.* 1.72.
28. Plut. *Mar.* 44.4; Flor. 2.9.14.
29. App. *BC.* 1.73.
30. Plut. *Mar.* 43.3–4.
31. Carney, Thomas Francis, *A Biography of C. Marius*. Chicago:

Argonaut Publishers, 1970, p.63; App. BC. 1.74.

32. Plut. *Mar.* 44.6.

33. Oros. 5.19.

34. App. BC. 1.73.

35. App. BC. 1.73; Kyle, Donald G., *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001, pp.128–54.

36. Plut. *Mar.* 43.6.

37. App. BC. 1.74; Plut. *Mar.* 44.5. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin)

38. Plut. *Mar.* 43.4.

39. Carney, Thomas Francis, *A Biography of C. Marius*. Chicago: Argonaut Publishers, 1970, p.67.

40. Plut. *Mar.* 45.1–3. (trans. John Dryden)

41. Kyle, Donald G., *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001, pp.128–54.

42. App. BC. 1.75.

43. Plut. *Mar.* 45.1–6.

44. Diod. 37.29.4.

45. Frier, Bruce, 'Roman Life Expectancy: The Pannonian Evidence', *Phoenix* 37.4 (1983), pp.328–44.

46. Kyle, Donald G., *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001, pp.128–54.

47. Val. Max. 9.11.2.

48. Gran. Lic. 36; Val. Max. 9.2.1.

49. Kyle, Donald G., *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001, pp.128–54.

50. App. *Mith.* 51.

Chapter XX: Sulla

Quote: Plut. *Sull.* 6.7. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin)

1. Plut. *Sull.* 11.1.
2. App. *Mith.* 22.29, 35; Plut. *Sull.* 11.2.
3. Plut. *Sull.* 11.3, 12.1–6.
4. Plut. *Sull.* 13.1–3; App. *Mith.* 38.
5. Plut. *Sull.* 13.3–4. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin)
6. Plut. *Sull.* 14.1–7; Plut. *Sull.* 15.1–4.
7. Plut. *Sull.* 16.1–6.
8. Oros. 6.2.
9. Plut. *Sull.* 16.7–8, 17.1, 19.1–4.
10. Liv. *Per.* 82.1; Plut. *Sull.* 19.4.
11. Plut. *Sull.* 20.1–5, 21.1–4, 22.2–5, 23.4.
12. App. *Mith.* 52; Plut. *Sull.* 23.5–6, 24.1–4.
13. Gran. Lic. 26–27; Plut. *Sull.* 22.5, 24.3.
14. App. *Mith.* 59, 60.
15. App. *Mith.* 61; Plut. *Sull.* 19.6, 25.2.
16. Liv. *Per.* 83.4.
17. App. *BC.* 1.76.
18. Plut. *Sull.* 27.1–5, 28.1–3.
19. App. *BC.* 1.87.
20. Plut. *Sull.* 29.1.
21. Plut. *Sull.* 28.4–8.
22. Oros. 5.20; Plut. *Sull.* 28.8; Diod. 38.15.1.
23. Plut. *Sull.* 28.8.
24. App. *BC.* 1.89–93; Plut. *Sull.* 29.1–8, 30.1.
25. Plut. *Pomp.* 10.4; Vell. 2.27.5; Liv. *Per.* 88.3.
26. App. *BC.* 1.94. (trans. Horace White)
27. Plut. *Sull.* 30.2–3, 32.1.
28. Plut. *Sull.* 31.1–2. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin)
29. Plut. *Sull.* 31.3.
30. Flor. 2.9.26.
31. Suet. *Iul.* 1.3.

- 32. Plut. *Sull.* 31.4, 33.2.
- 33. Plut. *Crass.* 2.3.
- 34. Plut. *Sull.* 31.6. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin)
- 35. Aug. *De Civ. Dei.* 3.28.
- 36. Plut. *Iul.* 6.3; Gran. Lic. 36.
- 37. Plut. *Sull.* 33.1.
- 38. Cic. *Leg.* 3.22; Liv. *Per.* 89.3.
- 39. App. *BC.* 1.100–101.
- 40. App. *BC.* 1.101. (trans. Horace White)
- 41. Liv. *Per.* 89.11.
- 42. App. *BC.* 1.103.
- 43. Plut. *Sull.* 36.1–4, 37.1–4, 38.1–4. (trans. Bernadotte Perrin)

Chapter XXI: Triumvirate

Quote: Suet. *Iul.* 1. 3. (trans. J.C. Rolfe)

1. Plut. *Pomp.* 10.1–2, 12.1–3.
2. Plut. *Sull.* 29.1–8, 30.1; Plut. *Pomp.* 14.1–6.
3. Plut. *Sull.* 34.4–5.
4. Plut. *Crass.* 6.6–7, 7.2.
5. Plut. *Pomp.* 17.3–4, 20.2.
6. Plut. *Crass.* 8.1–3, 9.1–7, 10.1–6, 11.1–8.
7. App. *BC.* 1.120.
8. Plut. *Pomp.* 21.1–2.
9. Plut. *Crass.* 11.8.
10. Plut. *Pomp.* 22.1–6, 23.3.
11. Plut. *Crass.* 2.1–2.
12. Dio. 36.23.1–5, 36.24.1–5; Plut. *Pomp.* 26.4.
13. App. *Mith.* 91, 94, 111.
14. Liv. *Per.* 102.1; Plut. *Pomp.* 38.1–3.
15. Dio. 37.21.1.
16. Plut. *Iul.* 5.1, 11.1–2.
17. Suet. *Iul.* 6.1.
18. Plut. *Iul.* 5.2–5.
19. Plut. *Crass.* 13.1; Vell. 2.43.4; Plut. *Iul.* 6.1–7.
20. Frank, Tenney, 'Roman Census Statistics from 225 to 28 B.C.', *Classical Philology* 19.4 (1924), pp.329–41; Dio. 37.49.1–5.
21. Dio. 38.7.4.
22. Dio. 37.54.3–4.
23. Plut. *Pomp.* 47.5–6.
24. Dio. 37.7.1–6.
25. Plut. *Pomp.* 14.9.
26. Plut. *Iul.* 21.6.
27. Dio. 39.36.1–2; Plut. *Crass.* 15.5.
28. Plut. *Pomp.* 52.3, 53.4, 55.1.
29. Plut. *Crass.* 31.1–6.
30. Plut. *Iul.* 27.1–10, 35.5.

31. App. *BC*. 2.32–35. (trans. Horace White)
32. Plut. *Iul*. 34.1–9, 35.1–11.
33. App. *BC*. 2.82–84.
34. Vell. 2.53.1–4, 2.54.1–2, 2.55.2.
35. Plut. *Iul*. 56.1–8.
36. Dio. 44.8.4.

Chapter XXII: Amatius

Quote: App. BC. 3.2. (trans. Horace White)

1. Pappano, Albert Earl, 'The Pseudo-Marius', *Classical Philology* 30.1 (1935), pp.58–65; App. BC. 3.2; Liv. Per. 116.8; Val. Max. 9.15.1.

2. Nic. Dam. Aug. 14.

3. Pappano, Albert Earl, 'The Pseudo-Marius', *Classical Philology* 30.1 (1935), pp.58–65.

4. Val. Max. 9.15.1

5. Pappano, Albert Earl, 'The Pseudo-Marius', *Classical Philology* 30.1 (1935), pp.58–65; Cic. Att. 12.49.1–2.

6. Nic. Dam. Aug. 14; Pappano, Albert Earl, 'The Pseudo-Marius', *Classical Philology* 30.1 (1935), pp.58–65.

7. Pappano, Albert Earl, 'The Pseudo-Marius', *Classical Philology* 30.1 (1935), pp.58–65; Val. Max. 9.15.1.

8. Suet. Iul. 82.2.

9. Liv. Per. 116.3; Suet. Iul. 82.2. (trans. J.C. Rolfe)

10. Liv. Per. 116.3.

11. Liv. Per. 116.4.

12. App. BC. 3.2.

13. Liv. Per. 116.5–6.

14. App. BC. 3.2–3.

15. App. BC. 3.2–3; Pappano, Albert Earl, 'The Pseudo-Marius', *Classical Philology* 30.1 (1935), pp.58–65.

16. Cic. Phil. 1.2.

17. App. BC. 3.2–3.

18. Liv. Per. 116.8; Cic. Phil. 1.2; Pappano, Albert Earl, 'The Pseudo-Marius', *Classical Philology* 30.1 (1935), pp.58–65.

19. Nic. Dam. Aug. 14.

20. Pappano, Albert Earl, 'The Pseudo-Marius', *Classical Philology* 30.1 (1935), pp.58–65.

21. Meijer, F.J., 'Marius' Grandson', *Mnemosyne* 39.1/2 (1986), pp.112–21.

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23. Cic. Phil. 1.2. (trans. C.D. Yonge and B.A. London)

24. Meijer, F.J., 'Marius' Grandson', *Mnemosyne* 39.1/2 (1986), pp.112–21.

25. Nic. Dam. *Aug.* 14.

Chapter XXIII: Principate

Quote: Suet. *Aug.* 28.3. (trans. J.C. Rolfe)

1. Suet. *Iul.* 83.1–2.

2. Plut. *Iul.* 67.8.

3. Suet. *Aug.* 7.2; App. *BC.* 3.71–72.

4. App. *BC.* 3.96.

5. Plut. *Cic.* 36.1–6.

6. App. *BC.* 4.107–124, 5.122–126.

7. Plut. *Ant.* 68.1–4, 76.1–5, 77.1–4, 78.1.

8. Dio. 53.2–12.

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14. Suet. *Aug.* 28.3. (trans. J.C. Rolfe)

15. CIL 6.41024

16. Suet. *Aug.* 28.3.

17. Frank, Tenney, 'Roman Census Statistics from 225 to 28 B.C.', *Classical Philology* 19.4 (1924), pp.329–41; Suet. *Tib.* 22–26; Jos. *AJ.* 19.2–3.

18. Suet. *Ner.* 24.1–2.

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22. Heather, Peter, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*. New York: Oxford

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26. Heather, Peter, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, p.431.

Chapter XXIV: Legacy

Quote: John Emerich Edward Dalberg, Lord Acton, *Historical Essays and Studies*. London: MacMillan, 1907. Letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton, 5 April 1887.

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